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AN ANTANDROY DWELLING (*see* p. 116)

# Across Madagascar

by

**Olive Murray Chapman**

F. R. G. S.

*17 Illustrations from photographs by the Author  
And a Map*

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## Author's Foreword

The journey through Madagascar described in this book covered between two and three thousand miles, and was made in the spring and summer of 1939.

The main object of my expedition, apart from exploring the wonderful and varied scenery of the island, was to see and photograph as many of the different native tribes as possible, and to learn something of their life and customs.

In particular I planned to see the Tanala people, primitive forest tribes living in bamboo huts in tiny and often very remote hill-top villages among the wooded mountains of the interior, whose secret burial places, hidden away in the jungle usually in almost inaccessible places, had rarely if ever been seen by Europeans.

Among the other tribes I hoped to visit were the Antaimoro on the east coast, direct descendants of the Arabs, and the very primitive Antandroy and Mahafaly in the extreme south and south-west.

I owe a great debt to the Rt. Rev. Ronald O'Ferrall, until recently Bishop in Madagascar of the Anglican Mission, for interesting information, more especially regarding the Antaimoro tribe, to Mr. Anderson of Tsihombe and other members of the Norwegian and American-Lutheran Mission for their kind hospitality and details respecting the Antandroy and other southern tribes, and to Mr. Gordge, of the Friends' Mission, for information about the Sakalava tribe.

In order to carry out my plans I was frequently obliged to travel long distances off the beaten track through very difficult country. The fact that I succeeded was largely due to the help and encouragement I received from French administrators throughout the island.

I would like to express my gratitude to the late French Ambassador in London, Monsieur Corbin, for valuable letters of introduction to Monsieur Cayla, late Governor-General of Madagascar; and to Messieurs Decary and Poupon and other

officials whose help and advice made my forest journeys possible. Without their valuable assistance I should have been unable to obtain the necessary native carriers.

I want in addition to emphasize my gratitude to all who, apart from the help they supplied, took such a real interest in my journeys, and were good enough to express the hope, also my own, that my forthcoming book, together with my film and photographs, would, on my return to England, serve to forge a closer link between Europe and Madagascar by helping to make this beautiful French colony better known.

OLIVE MURRAY CHAPMAN.

*Blewbury, 1940*  
*London, 1942*

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## CHAPTER I

### PRELUDE

Two hundred and fifty miles off the East Coast of Africa, from which it is separated by the Mozambique Channel, lies the great and, to the world at large, little-known island of Madagascar—a land of romance and mystery, with a combined area equal in size to that of France, Holland, and Belgium rolled into one. Nearly a thousand miles in length, with an average breadth of 230 miles, Madagascar lies between 12 and 29 degrees south of the Equator. Although so near to Africa, there is a complete and surprising absence of the wild game that abounds in the great Continent. The vast forests of Madagascar contain practically no wild animals other than the variety of lemurs peculiar to the country. The rivers, it is true, abound in crocodiles, and of snakes (non-poisonous) and insects, especially spiders, their number is legion; but of the lion, the tiger, the elephant and the other wild animals of Africa, curious to relate, there are no traces whatever. A possible explanation may be found in the fact that, whereas geologists tell us the island of Madagascar was at one time undoubtedly part of Africa—as proved by the discovery of a huge fossil dinosaur in the Jurassic Beds of the northern part of the country—it is believed that a great cataclysm occurring about 1000 B.C., and forming what is now the Mozambique Channel, separated it from the African Continent, most of the animal life perishing at the time.

What, then, of the origin of the present-day natives? Who are the Malagasy? What is their history, and where did they come from? Here again is a question not altogether solved; for, although traces of African and negroid blood are to be found among certain of the tribes, especially in the west, the main stock is obviously from the East, and it is now generally accepted by anthropologists that the largest and most important tribe of the Malagasy—the Hova, who inhabit the central plateau known as Imerina—came originally from the Malay Straits and the Polynesian Archipelago. Tradition tells us that they conquered an aboriginal tribe who were in possession of Imerina before their arrival. These people, the Vazimba, were of African origin and were said to be dwarfs, similar to the pre-Bantus of Central Africa. Later, the Hova held these legendary people in great reverence, worshipping their spirits, and declaring

that their own kings were their direct descendants. Prehistoric tombs, consisting of a pile of great stones and said to be the burial-places of the Vazimba, are found in several places in Imerina, and are still looked upon with awe by the people, who consider the hills upon which these tombs rest as holy ground, and are often afraid to approach anywhere near.

The Hova, although the most important, were but one of the many tribes who had settled in Madagascar. There were others believed to have come originally from Arabia, Persia, East Africa, India, and the South Seas. These all intermarried, with the result that in Madagascar today may be found all shades of colour in the skins of the people, from very dark to a light olive tint; all shapes of the head, and an astonishing variety of hair from smooth and straight to extremely frizzy. The Hova, of Malay origin, were superior in intellect to all the other tribes, and gradually assumed control of a great part of the island, keeping themselves strictly apart from the other races, seldom if ever intermarrying with them. Their skin is often no darker than that of a Spaniard or an Italian; their hair is black and straight, their eyes almond-shaped, noses rather flat, their mouths large but well formed. A striking contrast to the Betsileo tribe, who occupy the central plateau to the south of the Hova, and whose frizzy hair, black skin, thick lips, and negroid traits point to their having originated from Melanesian stock or mixed with people of African blood.

Little by little the Hova subdued many of the other tribes of the island, till at last, in 1787, their Warrior King Adrianimpoinimerina set up his wooden palace on the hilltop of Ambohimanga in Imerina, and from there conquered the King of Antananarivo, or Tananarive as it is called today, which then became the capital of the country and the seat of government of the victorious Hova.

Having united the separate tribes of Imerina, Adrianimpoinimerina ventured beyond, to the north, south, east, and west of the island. Most of the other tribes in these areas came under his sway, although he utterly failed to conquer the warlike Sakalava people in the west, and certain of the forest people of the Tanala tribes in the south-east, who kept their independence in spite of repeated assaults.

The warrior king did much for the people during his reign by encouraging agriculture and organizing an army for defence. It is said that, should a beggar come to him, he would hand the man a spade and command him to go and work in the fields, and

then he would have plenty to eat, for already the plains and swamps below the hills upon which the capital stood had to a large extent been converted into the extensive rice fields which form the livelihood of so many today.

On his death-bed, Adrianimpoinimerina called to his son, Radama, who succeeded him, and said: "I am soon to be gathered to my fathers, and to your hands I commit the kingdom. Remember, its boundaries are the sea. Never forget, although I am to die, I shall come back and stand beside you, and I shall whisper in your ear."

Radama I did all in his power to fulfil his father's dying command. His armies made raids in every direction; villages were fired, the resisting people sold into slavery or massacred, until the name of Hova came to be feared and hated by the conquered tribes.

Keen for the education of his subjects, and realizing that the white man had much to teach them, Radama made no objection to the arrival of the first missionaries, members of the London Missionary Society, in 1818. It is to the work of this Society that the conversion of many of the Hova tribe to Christianity was in the first instance due. The English missionaries found a people whose whole lives were overshadowed by fears—fear of their ancestors, fear of evil spirits, fear of witch doctors, and fear of God, or Zanahary as He is called. For belief in a Creator has always existed among the Malagasy, although He plays but a small part in their lives and is looked upon as but another powerful spirit to be feared and propitiated. "God made us hands and feet. Then He went away and left us to ourselves. We are afraid of Him." This is the pathetic answer of a Malagasy when questioned as to his beliefs by a missionary. The new message telling of a God of Love and of the saving power of the Christ came as a wonderful revelation to the first little band of Hova who heard it. Their lives were changed. They were free of the awful fear of evil spirits. They had been brought from darkness into light. In 1831 twenty of them came forward and were baptized; others followed their example, and so the Malagasy Church was born.

Radama in the meanwhile had died, and had been succeeded by his chief wife, Imavo, who had herself renamed Ranavalona I. Compared to a female Caligula, she was a cruel, ruthless woman of great energy and power, and, unlike her husband, was antagonistic to Christianity. At her succession, while issuing a proclamation that she would follow the late king's example and

allow the missionaries to continue their work of educating the people, she inwardly determined to get rid of them. It was suggested to her by the diviners, her advisers, who themselves feared the spreading of Christianity, that those of her people who had become Christians were disloyal because they were worshipping Jehovah and Jesus, the ancestors of the foreigner. And, moreover, when she enquired the reason why the missionaries spent money on schools for her subjects and took so much trouble to teach and help them, it was explained that this was all done with a purpose. The queen of the country who had sent these people would one day come and take them for herself. Genuinely afraid for her own and the country's safety, Rana-valona decided to put an end once and for all to the spreading of the new religion. She began by ordering her sewing women, most of whom belonged to the Mission where they had been taught, to miss Sunday worship and to appear instead at the palace to sew as on other days.

The following Sunday, when passing a little church, she heard the singing of the Christian congregation, and her rising anger reached its climax. Shortly after, she issued the following proclamation to a huge gathering of fifty thousand of her subjects. It read thus:

"All who have received baptism, entered into the new religion, and formed separate houses for prayer and worship, are required to report to the public officers in the course of a month, and if they do not confess within that period they shall surely die."

The missionaries were then ordered to leave the country, but before they left they succeeded in finishing the printing of the complete Bible which was given to the Malagasy Christians for the first time in their native tongue. So eager were the people to obtain copies, that they made long journeys to obtain them, risking death should their motive be discovered.

Now followed twenty-five years of terrible persecution, during which time the magnificent faith and courage of those early Malagasy Christians never wavered. Harold Ridgewell in *The Great Island* quotes an interesting letter sent soon after the departure of the missionaries in 1835 to two of their number by some of these native Christians. They wrote:

*"We do not perceive any change in the mind of the Queen, but we have less interruption since the Europeans, our friends, left us, as it is perhaps thought that we shall certainly forget the Word of*

*God, now that we have no teachers here. The Queen, however, does not know that the best Teacher of all, the Holy Spirit, is still with us. . . .*

*"By the strength of God we shall still go forward and not fear what may befall us. We will go forward in the power of the Lord and, if accused by the people, we will still go forward. The Bibles that were left in our possession have all been circulated, and many are wishing to obtain complete copies. Do send us some, and let them be of small print, so that we can easily preserve them, and the Pilgrim's Progress also; let it be sent very soon; we are very desirous of it, for it rejoices our hearts. All the Christians here are teaching others to read. Do not forget us in your prayers."*

Little by little news filtered through of what followed: how two hundred Malagasy Christians were martyred, some by stoning, others by spearing, while a number were hurled to death over a rocky precipice on the west of the city, or condemned to be burnt alive. Many others were forced to drink poison, while the rest were beaten, thrown into filthy prisons, clamped in irons, and left to die, or else sold into slavery.

But nothing would make these heroic martyrs renounce their newly found faith. Like the early Christians of old, rather than do so they faced death and torture with dauntless courage, frequently singing hymns, and praying to the last. Today, within the capital, Tananarive, among the large number of churches, including the Anglican and Catholic cathedrals, are four buildings of special significance. They are the Martyr Memorial Churches, erected by public subscription from Britain, and built on the sites of the former places of execution, in memory of those who gave their lives for Christ in the Great Persecution.

It was a happy day, not only for the Christians but for the people at large who had also suffered under her tyranny, when Ranavalona I, the Persecuting Queen as she was called, died in 1861. She had utterly failed to stamp out Christianity, which had greatly increased rather than decreased during her reign, in spite of all the suffering and persecution it had endured.

Ranavalona was succeeded by her son Prince Rakoto, who took the title of Radama II, and who for long had been in sympathy with the Christians, although not a professing Christian himself. The victim of intriguing parties, he was murdered after only two years' reign, but during that time he declared freedom of worship for every religion. The missionaries were invited to return, and within the next few years not only had the London Missionary Society resumed its labours, but work had

also been started by the Norwegian and American Lutherans, the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Society of Friends—all of whom have done, and are doing, fine work among the existing Christians and amongst those countless others whose lives are still overshadowed by fear and superstition.

During the next few years after Radama's death the ensuing rulers did nothing to hinder the educative work of the missionaries, and in 1869 Ranoma, who took the name of Ranavalona II, came to the throne. The new queen was a Christian, and had been so secretly all through the persecution. As a child she had seen a young woman of the name of Rasalama, the first of the Malagasy martyrs, speared to death rather than denounce Christ. She had watched her die with a prayer on her lips, and so great was the impression made upon the child of that woman's bravery that Ranoma, unknown to her family, sought instruction in the new faith whenever possible. On her accession Ranavalona II married her prime minister, according to the general custom of the queens of Madagascar. His palace in Tananarive may be seen near to that belonging to the queens. The two were publicly baptized in 1869, and six months later, to the amazement and fear of many of the people, the new queen ordered the destruction of the royal idols, and in particular her own idol, which went by the name of Mahavaly. A quaint and interesting account is given in Archdeacon McMahon's book, *Christian Missions in Madagascar*. He quotes a translation from the story given by the man whose task it was to destroy the royal idols. The following extracts are taken from the man's account:

“On arriving at the house of Rainimaso, the keeper of Mahavaly, the officer said: ‘To whom does Mahavaly belong, to her forefathers or to your forefathers?’ When they heard this they were all afraid, but the officer said: ‘Don’t be afraid, but answer me. To whom does the idol belong?’ Then the keeper answered, saying: ‘If the Queen asks this, we answer, “The idol belongs to her ancestors, we are only the keepers.”’ Then the officer answered: ‘In that case, the Queen orders her idol to be burnt—“for it only deceives the people and wastes their goods, so I order it to be burnt”, says the Queen. “I trust in God and rest on Him, and order you who keep the idol to deliver it up that it may be burnt; also, if you keep or hide any part of it, I will burn you as well.”’

"All present were thunderstruck, and when they were ordered to fetch it down from its place in the north end of the house, not one of them moved for fear. Then the officer sent me to fetch it.

"I went up and fetched down the box in which the idol was kept, and all belonging to it, viz. two wooden boxes. The one box was full of red and purple silk ; in the other box was the idol itself, which was called 'The Great One'. It was made of two pieces of wood, each seven inches long, and as large as one's wrist. It was wrapped up in different-coloured cloth, and covered with oil and incense, decorated with agate and silver beads ; in shape it was like a bird with a red head and wings glittering with its dressing of beads. When I took hold of it I thought it was alive, but when I raised it up I saw that it was not. They all looked scared and shouted out : 'If he does not die suddenly it must be true that there is Jehovah to whom he prays!'

"When I went to burn it, one of the officers said : 'Look out for your fire, for if it is not consumed they will say "The Great One put out the fire".' So I put some grease on the wood and burnt Mahavaly, which was not easy to do, for owing to the amount of oil on him he was slippery, but when he got into the fire he burnt like a bundle of dried grass, and I took care that it was all burnt, as I was glad of the job. After it was over, and the people were leaving, I heard some of the keepers telling how I fell down dead. They did not know that I was near, so I called out : 'I am here, and whoever says I fell down dead is a liar' ; and they all looked very foolish."

The destruction of the idols made a tremendous impression upon the people and when, afterwards, nothing serious happened and the country prospered under the new rule and religion, those who still remained heathen, imagining that the God of the white man must be stronger than theirs, came forward in large numbers to the native evangelists and missionaries for instruction in Christianity. This revival took place mainly among the Hova tribe ; the majority of the other and more primitive tribes continued to serve their idols and rely on their charms as before, and as many of them still do today.

Ranavalona II reigned for fifteen years. She came to the notice of Queen Victoria, who took a great interest in her, sending her out from England a beautifully bound Bible and other

gifts. On her death she was succeeded by Ranavalona III, the second Christian queen and the last of the Hova Dynasty, which had lasted just over a hundred years, to remain on the throne, for 1895 saw the successful French invasion of the island, resulting shortly afterwards in Madagascar becoming a French colony.

For many years previously French interest had predominated in Madagascar, although from time to time unsuccessful attempts to form coastal settlements had been made by various other countries. The earliest traders to visit the island are believed to have been the Phoenicians; they were followed some hundreds of years later by Indians and Arabs, especially the latter, who came in great numbers, and used the port of Majunga as a centre for their slave raiders. Ancient Arab influence may well account for the many Arab beliefs and customs still found in certain of the heathen rites and ceremonies of some of the tribes, particularly among the Antaimoro on the east coast, who, together with the last two kings of the Antanosy tribe in the south, claim direct descent from the Arabs, and in some of whose faces may be found traces of Arab features.

The first white men to discover Madagascar were the Portuguese, who sighted the island in 1500. Five years later a Portuguese squadron landed on the south coast, and the remains of the fort they built there may still be seen near Fort-Dauphin. Following the Portuguese, the Dutch and also the English all made efforts to start coastal settlements. The former settlers lost so many of their number from fever that they abandoned all further attempts at colonization, while British efforts never materialized into anything worth while.

It was left to the French to persevere. Their first landing took place at Manafeafy on the south coast, twenty-five miles from Fort-Dauphin, on December 13, 1643. They named the place Saint Luce, after the Saint whose festival it was that day, and by which name it is still known. Other French ships arrived in due course, and a little settlement of about seventy colonists was formed. But soon malaria played such havoc among the new arrivals that they left for a healthier part of the coast, twenty-five miles away. They settled at Tolonaro (many bones), renaming it Fort-Dauphin. Here their health revived, and they found the valley of Ambolo rich and fertile with many streams and rivers. Owing, however, to the cruel oppression of the natives by the French Governor, Pronis, who, among other oppressions, sold a number of the unfortunate Malagasy who served the colony as slaves and shipped them abroad, revolt

broke out among the people, and the first attempt at French colonization came to an untimely end, many of the colonists being massacred by the natives.

Nothing daunted, however, the French persevered. Commercial relationships and treaties took place through the years that followed, until at last, in 1894, they demanded of the Malagasy Government, then under the rule of the last of the Hova queens, Ranavalona III, that the island should be recognized as a French Protectorate, with its foreign policy in French hands. Disputes which followed aroused the anger of France, and relations with the Malagasy Government were broken off. A French expeditionary force of eighteen thousand men landed at Majunga on January 1, 1895, and the troops set off on what proved to be a terrible march across country to Tananarive, for in those days there were no roads and no bridges.

Fording rivers and crossing great ravines, the soldiers pressed on, climbing the steep mountain ascents up on to the bare highlands of the central plateau. They met with little resistance from the natives, but hundreds fell by the wayside victims, to fever and dysentery, which played havoc among them; consequently it was a bare remnant that finally struggled to the outskirts of the capital. Here again they met with hardly any resistance from the intimidated native army. Mounting their guns on a hilltop to the east of the city, the French troops fired on the royal palace. After a couple of cannon-shots had fallen outside her window the queen became so alarmed that she ordered the white flag to be hoisted, and sent a message to General Duchesne, the French Commander, offering surrender. The queen was shortly afterwards banished to France and later to Algiers; the native Government of the Hova was at an end, and Madagascar had become a French Colony. There is no doubt that since their occupation in 1895 the French have done, in this short time, a great deal for the Malagasy people under their care, apart from the construction of roads and the opening of hospitals and government schools.

During the rule of the native Hova kings and queens, life was in continual danger and subject to unjust laws made by individual rulers, who frequently hindered any progress that might have been made. Now, after a few uprisings, the people have settled down happily under the new administration.

There is little fear of further insurrection, owing partly to the fact that the French Government have followed their usual

colonial policy of giving the native the right to French citizenship. This right he has to earn by good conduct and by the undertaking to shoulder the entire responsibility of a French citizen by paying his full tax, and by undertaking compulsory military service.

There is no official colour bar ; intermarriage is allowed, although not encouraged ; and an educated Malagasy has the right to enter all the professions, with the result that many of the present-day Hova have become successful doctors, dentists, accountants, and lawyers. Briefly, the Malagasy French citizen has equal rights with his white neighbour. Whatever may be one's own views on this subject, there is no doubt that this policy—of the absorption of the native into the life of his European rulers, and the seeking to make him one with them—is an interesting experiment, and has certainly proved a success in Madagascar, in so far as it has resulted, as far as I could see, in a contented state of affairs among the civilized section of the people, of whom the Hova form the greater part, and an added self-respect amongst those of them who have gained the right to the privilege of French citizenship.

This, then, in very brief outline, is the history of Madagascar up to the start of the World War in 1939. A country still in the making, its resources to a great extent undeveloped, while its people, apart from those already civilized, are gradually receiving enlightenment under wise French rule.

But, with all this, the island remains completely unknown to the world at large, untouched as yet by the pleasure cruise and the tourist. A land of mountains and deserts, great rivers and calm lagoons. A land of vast stretches of primeval forest, through which it is still possible to explore far off the beaten track, and where in certain remote districts, the visit of a white man is still a source of wonder and excitement to the primitive native. This was the country that for long had fired my imagination, and for which I set sail in the early spring of 1939. What I found there, and what I experienced, I have told in the following pages.

## CHAPTER II

### JOURNEY OUT

SHORTLY before starting off on my voyage to Madagascar I was told that somewhere to the south-east of the island, among the forest natives of the Tanala tribes, were some particularly

interesting and primitive people, living in isolated and remote hilltop villages in the vicinity of a sacred mountain called Amdomdroumbi. I had obtained this information from Dr. Roger Heim, a French explorer and naturalist attached to the Natural History Museum of Paris, with whom I had been put in touch by correspondence through a friend, who had met this traveller after the latter's return from an expedition to Madagascar a few years ago, and who thought he might be of help to me.

In answer to my queries, Dr. Heim assured me that if, as was my intention, I proposed to visit the more primitive tribes in the remoter parts of the country, I would find the Tanala people in this district among the most interesting; completely unspoiled and, moreover, living amidst beautiful surroundings far off the beaten track. Their Chiefs, he stated, had been most friendly to him, and he had no doubt they could be induced to be equally friendly to me. If I wished to find these people I must make for a village in the forest called Fort-Carnot. Here I would find a native Government official, who would doubtless direct and help me, as he had helped him.

This intriguing information provided me at once with a definite object for the start-off of my adventures. It appealed to my imagination—a primitive forest people, living in tiny bamboo huts on the hilltops, near a sacred mountain.

To find my way there, to stay among these folk, to learn something of the way they lived; that, I resolved, should form one of my main objectives during my journey across Madagascar.

Towards the end of March 1939, with Europe under the shadow of another impending crisis, I prepared to sail eastward. My luggage had already gone on ahead to the ship, and I was being harassed by warnings from well-meaning friends on the inadvisability of leaving England at such a time, owing to the possibility of my being stranded abroad. I argued that, if everyone stopped doing everything for fear of a possible outbreak of the war that had not yet come, the world would come to a standstill! I determined to carry on with my plans in the hope that I might have time to accomplish what I was setting out to do, and be home again before any serious change in the situation. Happily, I was encouraged in this resolve by other friends, who agreed with my point of view and urged me to go forward and hope for the best. Nevertheless, I confess to feeling slightly chastened in spirit on arriving at Marseilles and boarding the *Metzinger*, one of the older and smaller boats of the Messageries Maritimes line. She had been a German boat until taken over

by the French after the Great War in 1918. I found myself the only British passenger. The South of France was not living up to its sunny reputation. There was a biting cold wind, the skies were grey, the sea choppy. We sailed at mid-day, after emotional scenes of farewell amongst some of the passengers, most of whom were obviously depressed at returning from their home leave, with the shadow of impending war over Europe. Indeed, many were in tears, for the French do not trouble to hide their feelings, and one of my table companions, a pretty little woman bound for Reunion Island, wept all through lunch.

A charming young couple from Luxemburg, a Monsieur and Madame Tommes, completed our table. They were returning to the Belgian Congo for three years, and were also in sorrowful mood, having recently left their parents. The atmosphere was contagious, and by the evening my spirits in their turn, which had been gradually sinking all day, reached a disgracefully low ebb. Try as one would, it was impossible not to keep wondering under what circumstances one would be returning to England in the autumn. There was no radio on board for the news, and one felt cut off and rather homesick.

By the next day, however, the spirits of the passengers, my own included, began to revive, although the weather continued cold and grey, and remained so until we reached Port Said a week later. I went ashore with Monsieur and Madame Tommes as soon as the ship put into port and, with many of the other passengers, we cheerfully gravitated to the famous Simon Artze Store.

Amazing, the tonic effect of a couple of hours on shore after a week of bad weather at sea ! All were in lightsome mood on return to the ship, and Madame B., who by now had happily settled down to a mild flirtation with one of the ship's officers, caused considerable excitement by nearly missing the boat. The pontoon bridge to the shore had been disconnected, when she was seen to be wildly waving on the quay and had to be rushed to the ship in a motor launch.

Soon we were slipping silently along the Suez Canal, having suddenly plunged from winter to summer. It was warm at last, the golden sunshine reflected on the pale sands of the desert, the sky a cloudless blue. After dinner I sat out on deck until late. There was a full moon, bathing the desert in silvery light, and amidst so much peace and beauty the turmoil and unrest in Europe seemed unreal and very far away.

After Suez and a couple of days of stifling heat in the Red

Sea we reached Djibuti early on Easter Sunday. When I looked out of my cabin window I found we had already arrived, but were anchored some distance out. It was a grey day, and there had been rain in the night. The jagged ranges of mountains opposite, in French Somaliland, were shrouded here and there in mist; in other places their summits were silhouetted purple against the sky, while the sea, glassy calm, was a pale silver grey. Had it not been for the crowds of gaily clad Somalis in their rowing boats alongside the ship, merchants with their wares, boatmen waiting to take passengers ashore, a mass of black humanity shouting and gesticulating, and waving to the passengers—the magenta, orange and crimson colours of their loose cotton garments reflected in the water—one might have imagined oneself looking over the sea towards the mountains of the Hebrides in Skye.

One other factor, however, completely dispelled this illusion: the heat; damp sticky heat, peculiar to Djibuti and the Red Sea, trying at all times, and especially so now, when the rains were not yet over.

After an early breakfast I took a motor-launch, in company with Monsieur and Madame Tommes, to the shore. It was about eight o'clock and we enjoyed a walk of about half a mile to the town, and from there to the French Church, hoping to be in time for the Easter Service. It proved to be just over, and we met the very large congregation coming away. All sorts and conditions; they included crowds of Somali men, women, and children, numerous French sailors, officers, and officials with their wives, a party of French nuns escorting a number of coal-black little Somali girls in blue-and-white check school uniforms, a varied crowd indeed of blacks and whites, but all one in their united worship on Easter Day.

On returning to the town we found the shops closed. The heat was intense; there were countless flies, and we were pursued on our way to the harbour by a crowd of small boys, some selling postcards, and one with a baby kid which he tried hard to press upon me!

As compared with the British port of Aden, Djibuti, with its wide and dusty boulevard, struck me as untidy and somewhat unfinished, and its native quarter is unspeakably squalid. One could well appreciate its importance, however, to the French, for not only was Djibuti a port of call and a coaling station for French ships trading with the Far East and East Africa, thus rendering these, and also French war vessels, independent of

the British coaling stations at Aden, but it was also the main outlet for trade from Abyssinia, to which it is connected by a good railway which runs to Addis Abbaba.

We returned to the *Metzinger* in a rowing boat manned by three stalwart Somalis, their shiny black skins glistening with heat as they bent energetically to the heavy oars.

There was a lovely sunset that night—stormy clouds with rifts of golden light—and later the sky suffused with rose as the sun sank behind the mountains. I had been thinking of Easter Day in England, of the village in the Chiltern Hills where I live and the little grey stone church with its decorations of spring flowers. How far away it seemed, and what would life be like there on my return? Once again, all on board were full of apprehension, the news just having come through by the ship's official wireless that the Italians had invaded and occupied Albania, and war clouds again threatened to break over Europe. The next day a sister ship of the *Metzinger* passed us on her way back to Marseilles, sirens blew, the passengers cheered and waved to each other—hilariously from the homeward-bound ship, rather sadly from our own.

And so, on through the Gulf of Aden, into the Indian Ocean, and down the East Coast of Africa, to Mombasa, Zanzibar, and Dar-es-Salaam. On reaching the Equator the ceremony of Crossing the Line was observed with its usual ceremonial. Neptune and his attendants, headed by the ship's band, walked in procession round the first and second class decks, after which all novices received their baptism—the men being lathered with soap and then ducked in a canvas bath, while the women were sprayed with scent.

It was late afternoon when, on April 15, we arrived at Mombasa, the approach to which shore, in spite of the fact that dusk was falling, struck me as most beautiful. The contrast from the bare and arid scenery of Somaliland, to which one had become accustomed during the last few days, was dramatic, for the island of Mombasa is green, with luxuriant tropical vegetation, and the river up which we sailed to the modern British port of Kilindini was bordered with masses of giant palm and coconut trees, intermingled with the dense foliage of beautiful mangroves.

Our port of call next day was Zanzibar. Once again it was already dark when we arrived. We anchored some distance from the shore, and the usual crowd of motor-launches and rowing-boats manned by excitable Swahili boatmen drew up

alongside. After dinner I met an Englishman who had joined the ship for a couple of days on his way to Dar-es-Salaam, and who kindly offered to take me ashore. It was pleasant to be talking to a fellow countryman again, and I gladly availed myself of the opportunity of seeing something of the old town. The sea was very rough and the jump from the ship ladder into the launch which took us ashore somewhat of an adventure. On landing we took a rickshaw and went for a drive through the town and native bazaars. I was struck by the beautiful Indian wood carving over the heavy nail-studded doors of the old houses that lined the narrow street of the principal bazaar. Some of the houses were once palaces belonging to former Sultans. A Sultan still rules Zanzibar, although the city is now a British Protectorate. Its cosmopolitan population of 45,000 is made up largely of Africans, Arabs, and Indians of all castes, with a very small percentage of Europeans, not more than three hundred. At one time Zanzibar was a great centre for the slave trade between Arabia and Africa, and it remains one of the most important trade centres of East Africa, the export of cloves being one of the chief industries. Indeed, I noticed the air was scented with cloves near the quay, where the store-houses were built.

As our rickshaw-men took us further into the old town, I was surprised by the silence and emptiness of its almost deserted streets—streets so narrow and winding that in places two cars could not possibly have passed each other. The wind had dropped, the air was very warm and full of sweet scents, especially noticeable by some gardens, full of flowering plants on the outskirts. Leaving the city we passed lonely villages: collections of mud huts amid groves of coconut trees, and in the distance one heard faintly the rhythmic beat of many tomtoms.

A native dance was in progress, and our rickshaw-men suggested taking us to see it. We agreed to go, but my companion, who knew Zanzibar well, warned me that the natives frequently become very drunk during these dances, and it might be wise for us to remain only a short while, as it was not always entirely safe for Europeans on these occasions. On reaching the enclosure where the dancing had taken place, we found it, unfortunately, just over and the people coming away. A small group of natives passed us a good deal the worse for drink, but they were quite friendly and took little notice of us.

We returned to the town the same way, enjoying the warm and scented air; re-passing through the silent mysterious

streets, and past the Sultan's palace. I was surprised to see a clock pointing to the hour of 3.30 p.m. instead of 9.30 p.m. My companion explained that the natives of Zanzibar keep African time. The clock starts the new day, not, as with us, after 12 p.m., but six hours later at sunrise, which at that moment was 6.a.m.

We stopped in the bazaar for a look at one of the merchant's shops, full of carved ivories and lovely silks. The owner, an Indian, said that the European situation had affected business to such an extent that no one was buying anything at all. There were very few tourists, and when they came they bought nothing. "If there is a war," he added mournfully, "I and many others here in Zanzibar will be ruined. It will be the end." Thus, all the world over, the same tension, the same apprehension of what lay ahead.

Dar-es-Salaam, formerly the capital of German East Africa, and now the seat of administration under British rule, was reached the next morning, and a big disembarkation took place of many passengers bound for the Belgian Congo and other parts of Africa. They included Monsieur and Madame Tommes and other acquaintances. The ship felt very depleted when, later in the day, we left the African coast and sailed eastward through the Mozambique Channel towards the Comoro Islands off the north-west of Madagascar. Here we ran into stormy weather and torrential rainstorms, delaying our arrival at the Comoro Islands until April 19.

The skies had cleared when, in the early morning, we approached the Islands, whose volcanic peaks, mysterious in their isolation, rise sheer out of the sea. After passing the Grand Comoro we anchored off the beautiful little tropical isle of Moheli, seldom seen by Europeans—other than the personnel of the French mail boats—and one of the loveliest of the group. A number of islanders were soon around the ship in their native canoes—flimsy craft hollowed out of the trunks of trees, and laden with bananas, coconuts, mangoes, and other fruits.

Hearing that we were to be here all day, I was anxious to visit Moheli, but no boats were forthcoming. Two of the men passengers accepted the offer of a native to make the crossing in his canoe. I thought of doing the same, but, as the sea was rough, decided to wait and see how this canoe fared before making up my mind to take another. I was glad I had done so, for halfway across it overbalanced and both young men fell into the water. Fortunately, they were able to swim, but they found it impossible to climb back into the canoe without over-

turning the boat. The sea was full of sharks, and their plight was serious, when just in time they were rescued by a rowing-boat from the shore. It was carrying the French Administrator, who was coming over from the island to visit the ship. Meanwhile, the canoe and its owner were drifting helplessly away, the boat gradually filling with water, while the unfortunate man shouted for help, apparently in vain. It was not until he was actually sinking that two of the islanders, roused at last, rowed to his rescue and brought him ashore after his own boat had sunk.

After lunch the Administrator offered to take me and another passenger back with him to the island, promising to let his boatmen return us to the ship before she sailed. Four sturdy islanders, singing as they rowed, took us ashore. The crossing took half an hour, for we were anchored some distance out. A breeze had sprung up, the sea became very choppy, and there was a strong tide. My companion (a Frenchwoman) was very nervous of the sharks, but I had full confidence in the boatmen and assured her we were in no danger.

Moheli was all that one expected of a tropical island. Masses of giant palm and coconut trees, and dense vegetation of all kinds covered the steep hillsides, and fringed the sandy shore. Near the rough wooden landing-stage was a primitive native village, with tiny huts made from the wood, and thatched with the dried leaves of coconut trees. These huts were without windows, and a roughly formed bamboo screen served as a door in front of the opening. Although I noticed a few people of negroid type, the majority were un-African in appearance, for the Comoro islanders are a mixed race peculiar to themselves.

Arab influence is very marked among them. Mussulmans are to be found in the Grand Comoro and in Moheli, and there are also many people belonging to the Sakalava tribe from Madagascar, who settled in the islands early in the nineteenth century, when they were driven from their homes by the conquering Hova. The Administrator kindly invited us to his bungalow. We followed a rough track up the hillside through green and luxuriant undergrowth, and forests of palm and coconut trees, and much vanilla. The island was rich in the latter, a great deal of which is exported. Giant bats were whirling round the tops of the trees, while here and there brilliant little birds, their emerald and crimson plumage gleaming in the sunlight, flashed across our path.

On reaching the Government bungalow the Administrator

and his wife refreshed us with cool drinks in the welcome shade of their home, the heat outside being intense and the mosquitoes particularly active. Our host told us that he had only recently been sent there, and he and his wife were to be stationed on the island for three years.

Theirs was an isolated life ; nevertheless, they appeared cheerful and contented, and were evidently determined to make the best of it, full of schemes for growing a flower garden, and glad because there was a creek down below on the shore, free from sharks, where they could bathe in safety.

We were rowed back to the ship after sunset with a few minutes to spare before she sailed.

I awoke the next morning to brilliant sunshine and a clear blue sky, flecked with swiftly moving billowy clouds, for a stiff breeze was blowing. We were passing some tiny islands, green with tropical vegetation which grew down to the shores of the little inlets and bays, the sands of which gleamed dazzling white against the deep blue of the sea.

Shortly afterwards we anchored off Mayotte in the waters of a great coral lagoon. The usual precarious jump into a rowing-boat from the ship's ladder, a rough but short passage, and we were on shore. Mayotte is larger and more developed than Moheli, but beyond the Administrator's bungalow and other French Government buildings, there were few European houses, for the number of people living here is very small. The residential quarter is set amidst lovely gardens, with an avenue of shady trees and flowering shrubs, among which were great masses of bougainvillea and the scarlet blossoms of hibiscus and poinsettia. The soil of all the Comoro Islands is extremely fertile, accounting for the luxuriance of the vegetation.

Crossing a long causeway over a narrow strip of sand with the sea on either side, I reached the other side of the island, where a native village straggles at the foot of a wooded hillside. Here again were traces of Eastern influence among the people, and many of the women were dressed Indian fashion, swathed in bright cotton saris of orange, red, and emerald, with many bracelets and ornaments.

After leaving the Comoro Islands, a night's voyage brought us at last to the north-west coast of Madagascar. The sun was rising when I saw from my cabin window the wide mouth of the Betsiboka river, with its blood-red cliffs and water of the same tint, for the mud in the river basin colours the water at times a deep red, while the soil on shore is frequently of a similar tint.

Indeed, everything seemed red, so much so that I could now understand why Madagascar has been called "The Red Island". In the distance I could see a green and wooded coastline, and realized we were nearing the port of Majunga, the first place of call in Madagascar for the mail boats from Europe.

There is no harbour, and ships anchor a short distance out in the river mouth. All round were many of the picturesque Arab dhows. These rough and ancient form of sailing-boats, manned by enterprising traders, had, many of them, come all the way from India with the north-east monsoon; they would return some months later with the south-westerly winds. These vessels are primitive in the extreme, with no cabin accommodation. When caught in a storm and the boat blown from its course, there is no hope for the crew, who face starvation unless sighted by a passing steamer. But year in and year out these hardy vendors risk death rather than forgo their trade with the Majunga merchants.

The Englishman from Zanzibar (Mr. P.), who was visiting Madagascar for business purposes and who, like myself, was to disembark at Tamatave on the east coast, took me ashore for a few hours at Majunga. Landing arrangements for passengers were curiously primitive for such an important port. One depended on two rather ramshackle motor-launches that plied between the ship and the quay, and were much overcrowded. My first impression of Madagascar, as seen from Majunga, was of red soil, red sea, and a colourful collection of natives, of whom Indians and picturesque Arabs in native dress intermingled with the Malagasy citizens, with here and there a few white-coated Customs officials and French colonists. The streets, shaded from the glaring sun by fine mango and palm trees, were crowded with a quaint and contrasting collection of rickshaws, taxis, and carts, the latter drawn by the hump-backed oxen of the country.

At the quay, near the rickshaw stand, everyone appeared to be calling, "Puss, Puss!", and I was amused to hear my companion doing the same. We were soon surrounded by rickshaws, which, he explained, always went by the name of "Pousse-pousse" out here. Somehow I could never quite get over my amusement at the quaint sight of some solemn and elderly Frenchman calling thus for a rickshaw. It always reminded me of the old nursery game of "Puss in the corner".

Having chosen a double rickshaw with three men to carry us, two behind and one in front, we went for a pleasant drive round

the outskirts of the town, through what my companion described as typical African bush country, and back along the Corniche Road. We passed several well-built French bungalows with pretty gardens laid out with trees and flowering shrubs, gay with brilliant splashes of colour from bougainvillea, hibiscus, and climbing plants of many varieties. Palm trees bordered the road, which at one point was shaded by a giant baobab, its trunk of enormous proportions; the contrast of this luxuriant vegetation with the blood-red colour of the soil and river mud was very striking, and quite different from anything I had ever seen.

Beyond the town lies the native quarter, consisting of a very big village and market-place, which I visited on a later occasion, for by mid-day the heat was such that we decided to go no further and to return to the ship; but this was easier said than done, facilities for taking passengers to the boat being primitive and few and far between. At last, after a long wait at the quay, an ancient launch drew alongside, and, with difficulty, we clambered into it off the steps of the wooden landing stage, over which the waves were lapping. A quantity of luggage was then hurled into the boat, which became so overloaded that it listed to one side and appeared in danger of capsizing. Amidst shouts and cries of "The boat is full!", "No more, no more!", "*Rien de plus!*", "*Rien! Rien!*", we at last pushed off, and, with the waves tossing us to and fro—for a sharp squall had sprung up—and the spray giving us a shower-bath at intervals, we steamed out to the *Metzinger*, which was still busily taking in cargo.

On leaving Majunga we encountered further bad weather, culminating in a violent tropical thunderstorm during the night, when the ship was struck. She shivered from stem to stern, but was fortunately saved from damage by the lightning conductor. The torrential rain which followed had fortunately cleared by the time we reached the beautiful island of Nosy-Bé, about twenty miles off the north-west coast of Madagascar. This island, with its lovely indented coastline and curving bays, is mountainous and rich with luxuriant tropical vegetation of all kinds. The Captain invited me and another passenger to go ashore with him to lunch with friends of his, a wealthy French planter and his wife, who own the greater part of the island, and grow coffee and sugar, and distil scent from the Ylang-Ylang plant, which is found in profusion here. The couple, who were young and very charming, came on board to meet us, and we went ashore in their launch. They then took us

for a lovely drive in a small Ford car over much of the island, along a roughly made road through the sugar plantations and the forests, which compose a large part of Nosy-Bé. We passed through several small native villages, consisting of thatched huts of coconut palm. Many of the people here belonged to the Sakalava tribe, some of whom intermarried with the islanders. I spoke to an old woman, the lobes of whose ears were artificially hollowed out to an immense size, forming large rings of dangling flesh, in which were placed brown wooden discs. She seemed rather proud of this adornment, and removed the disc from one ear to show me. Nothing would induce her, however, to be photographed, and when she saw my camera she hid her face, covering it with a shawl.

In another quarter I was surprised to see a little colony of Indians, a number of whom live on the island, and shortly after we passed through a deserted village, which at one time had been their home before they had moved their settlement nearer the sea. Here were what once had been houses instead of huts; well-built houses of red stone, which stone must long ago have been imported from India. A few of these houses had ancient wooden doors, beautifully carved and studded with nails, similar in every way to those found in Zanzibar.

The heat was great, the air heavy and humid after the rain, and the cool shade of our host's bungalow very welcome when we reached it. The house, well built, of stone, high up on a wooded hillside, overlooked a lovely view of the island below, while beyond, far out to sea, was the distant outline of the mountains of Madagascar.

The happy couple who lived here appeared to appreciate to the full their idyllic surroundings, and told us they had everything they wanted, including horses to ride, and a bathing-pool. I gathered they had only been married and settled on the island a year, and so far had been free of fever. Nosy-Bé, like many parts of the coast of Madagascar, is infested with mosquitoes, and malaria is prevalent.

As we rounded the most northerly point of Madagascar, further torrential rain, following a cyclone on shore, heralded our approach to Diego Suarez, the important naval port occupied by British troops in May 1942. Diego Suarez has a natural harbour, said to be one of the finest in the world, and is an important port of call for the coastal steamship service. The town takes its name from the Portuguese, who named it after Diego Diaz, captain of the squadron who first sighted the then

unknown island in 1500. Like the other coastal towns of Madagascar, Diego Suarez has a cosmopolitan native population of which Indians and Arabs form a considerable portion.

In spite of bad weather, I spent the morning on shore, landing soon after breakfast with Mr. P. The bazaars were crowded with many Indians, Arabs, and Chinese, as at Majunga. We hired a car and drove up into the hills past some French military posts to a point from where in fine weather one gets a magnificent view over the harbour. But now all was shrouded in mist, and to my disappointment I was unable to take any photographs.

On April 26, between three and four weeks after leaving Marseilles, I awoke to see a palm-fringed bay, with a curve of white sand, backed by dense forest—Tamatave, my landing port at last, and the end of the long voyage out.

## CHAPTER III

### TO TANANARIVE

BEFORE starting off on my journey across country, considerable preparation was necessary, and I had been invited to stay for a week or two in Tananarive, the capital, with the English Bishop in Madagascar, the Rt. Rev. Ronald O'Ferrall (since retired) and Mrs. O'Ferrall while I made my plans. The Bishop happened to be staying a few days in Tamatave, and so kindly met me on arrival and drove me to the hotel, where it was necessary to stay a night before the day's journey up to Tananarive.

The Tamatave hotel enjoys the reputation of being the worst in the world. It certainly would be hard to find a hotel more dilapidated and uncomfortable, a surprising fact considering Tamatave is one of the most important ports in the island, and that at which most newcomers disembark. The place was overrun with huge cockroaches, the rooms unswept and dirty, and the food almost uneatable. I was told that the French were contemplating building a new and a good hotel at Tamatave. It would certainly prove a boon and a blessing to all the missionaries and their families, Government servants and others, who are often forced to stay here a night on their first arrival in Madagascar.

Like all parts of the east coast, the climate of Tamatave is unhealthily steamy and hot, and there is a considerable amount of malaria. Walking was, at first, somewhat of an effort to

anyone unaccustomed to the country, but I got a good general idea of the place during a ride in a rickshaw. The little town, in which Malagasy of various tribes, Betsimisaraka predominating, intermingled with Hindu and Mussulmen traders, Arabs, Chinese, Creoles, and Europeans, was one of the most cosmopolitan I had seen, and full of interest. Forty-five years ago Tamatave was merely a collection of bamboo huts; today, with its well-built offices, bungalows bright with flowers, bank, stores, barracks, and churches, it is a busy centre of commerce and a general meeting place of East and West. The native quarter, some distance out, consists of densely packed wooden huts, where, oblivious of the heat and dust, countless little dark-skinned boys and girls shout and play, tumbling over one another, like children all the world over.

Early next morning I started off for the journey to Tananarive. The capital is connected with Tamatave by a single-line, narrow-gauge railway, which was constructed by the French and completed in 1913. It was later prolonged to Antsirabe. The line passes through magnificent forest and mountain scenery, and is a wonderful feat of engineering. The journey is a long one, the train leaving Tamatave at 5 a.m. and not reaching Tananarive until 8 p.m. On two alternative days in the week, however, one can travel faster and more comfortably, as I was able to do, over the same track in the "Michelin", a light rail motor coach with petrol engine and rubber tyres, which completes the distance of two hundred miles in nine hours instead of fourteen. One's heavy luggage follows next day in the train, passengers on the "Michelin" being allowed only one small suitcase each. The coach was provided with armchairs, and had large glass windows through which one got a splendid view of the country.

We were off just after 7 a.m. The sun, which had only just risen, had not yet broken through the light mist hanging in the air. We followed the coast for a short distance, the foamy breakers of the Indian Ocean on one side and on the other the silver water of great lagoons—glassy calm, and backed with luxuriant vegetation. After a while the route struck westward inland, through the first belt of forest which mounts upwards into the hills towards the high plateau, upon which Tananarive is built, 4,000 feet above sea level. The narrow line cut through dense jungle, dark and mysterious in the early morning mist, but by nine o'clock glinting in the brilliant sunshine, which had at last broken through, revealing an astonishing variety of

palm, bamboo, shrub, and trees of all kinds. Slowly we climbed upwards, through this primeval forest, the line winding by a series of hairpin bends far up into the hills, above wild gorges, rushing rivers, and waterfalls. Now and then a halt would be made at some tiny wayside station, where natives would sell fruit to the passengers, and at mid-day the train stopped for half an hour at the mountain village of Fanovara, where I enjoyed, in company with my fellow travellers, quite a good lunch at the station café. And so, on once more, ever upwards, the line curving round and round the steep mountain-sides, until the summit of the first ridge of hills was reached, overlooking a magnificent panorama of rugged peaks stretching away as far as eye could see.

The railroad now cut through another belt of forest and up green valleys where a great river swiftly running eastwards dashed and foamed over boulders and fell in sparkling cascades. From the depths of the valleys the densely wooded mountains rose sheer up for a thousand feet or more, the line winding gradually up and over their summits until the scenery underwent a sudden and dramatic change. We had reached the high plateau and had entered a bare and treeless country, with undulating hills and wide stretches of plain intersected with rice fields.

This was the large and important province of Imerina. Nothing could have been more different, both as regards scenery and climate, than this austere and rugged part of the country as compared with the green and tropical vegetation of the great forests sloping down into the hot and enervating atmosphere of the east coast.

Up here, on the plateau, there was a sharp nip in the air, and all felt the need of putting on their warm coats. After crossing a wide expanse of plain with many villages and rice fields I saw in the distance my first view of Tananarive, perched dramatically high up on a steep and rounded hill, whose summit was crowned by the Queen's Palace, standing out in proud silhouette against the sky.

As the train curved round the base of the hill it was astonishing to notice how the densely packed mud and sun-baked brick houses of the old city, with their narrow streets, appeared almost as if clinging to the sheer hillsides. They were built at all angles, and were backed in places by steep cliffs. The very fine and modern station of grey stone at Tananarive is surprisingly large in comparison with its little single-line railway, and the Malagasy are justly proud of it.



(Photograph by Cliché du Gov.-Général.)

TANANARIVE, AND THE QUEEN'S PALACE (see p. 34)



NEAR MT. IKONGO (see p. 55)

I was met on arrival by a French official from Government House, who on behalf of Monsieur Cayla, then Governor-General, presented me with a welcome to Madagascar. An honour and courtesy which I much appreciated.

Tananarive, or Antananarivo as it was called before the French Occupation, meaning "The City of a Thousand Cities" (or compounds), was, previous to the French conquest, the stronghold of the Hova Government. In those days the only communication the city had with the outside world was by narrow tracks over the mountains and through the forests down to the east coast, where from Tamatave, before the advent of the railway, travellers, stores, and merchandise all had to be carried along this difficult route by native bearers. The journey by filanzana (carrying-chair) took nine days.

It is said of the native King Radama that he refused to make the capital more accessible for fear of enemy attack. "If I make roads," he said, "the white man will only come and take my country. I have two allies—Hazo (the forest) and Tazo (fever), and if they are not overcome by the one they are killed by the other, so I shall be able to keep the invader at bay."

Today Tananarive is not only connected with the east coast by the railway, but it is also linked up with the north-west coast at Majunga, 350 miles distant, by means of a road, along which travels the weekly motor mail service. Roads also connect the capital with other parts of the country, and when the weather permits, and they are not flooded, it is possible to travel by motor from the north of the great island to the south at Fort-Dauphin, and from there across to Tuléar on the west coast. Journeys off the beaten track through the forests of the interior and down to the east coast must still be made, as I experienced for myself, in a filanzana with native bearers.

The month of April is the autumn in Madagascar, and the weather up on the high plateau was cool and exhilarating, with hot sunshine and a pleasant tang in the air. From the Royal Palace at the top of the town one looks down from a height of nearly 5,000 feet upon a wide plain intersected with rice fields, streams, and numerous little villages of red sun-baked mud and brick, the older ones walled. Beyond, some fifty miles away, is a great encircling range of mountains, many of them volcanic, whose highest peaks, those of Ankaratra, reach to nearly 10,000 feet. These mountain ranges stretch like a backbone all through the centre of the island, until they gradually slope away towards the south and west into vast plains. The eastern side of the range,

as already described, is covered by dense forests, and dips down sharply almost to the coast. Tananarive reminded me of a hill town in India, with its glimpses of the plain far below and its wonderful panorama of distant mountain ranges. The houses, many of them old, were nearly all of warm red, sun-baked earth and brick, with picturesque tiled roofs. Many were built on terraces cut into the hillside and packed closely together, connected in some cases by extremely narrow cobbled pathways with steps straggling upwards between ancient brick walls. At night, seen from below in the plain, the town was a mass of twinkling lights, giving the appearance of a fairy city hanging in the sky. The Bishop's house where I stayed is one of the oldest in the town, having been built for the first Anglican Bishop in Madagascar over sixty years ago. It was situated high up near the top of the city overlooking a fine view of the plain and mountains beyond. All around were a labyrinth of Malagasy houses that had sprung up since it was first built, and which, in company with the former, were all without drainage.

Owing to the prevalence of numerous rats, many of them plague-carriers, each house is supposed to keep three or four cats to cope with the pests, but even so the rats are a curse in Tananarive, as indeed they are throughout the country, especially in the villages, which are frequently overrun with them. The modern section of the town is supplied with good shops and some fine stone buildings, including schools and Government offices. It is well lighted with electricity, has broad streets laid out with avenues of trees, and fine public gardens, shaded with palms and eucalyptus and gay with masses of poinsettia—splashes of scarlet amidst the green.

A couple of days after my arrival these gardens, situated in the centre of the town, were the scene of a great gathering of Malagasy citizens, who had come to bid farewell to their Governor-General, who was shortly leaving Madagascar to take another appointment, and who, during his time of office, had, together with his charming wife, done a great deal to better the social life of the people. The "Manifestation" was attended by several thousands, mostly of the civilized Hova and Betsileo tribes from Imerina. A considerable number of these natives had obtained their French citizenship and wore European dress, but the majority of the crowd wore the "lamba", the garment of the country—a loose white blanket or sheet swathed around, toga fashion—over a tunic and calico trousers or knickerbockers, in the case of the men ; while the women wear it over

a long straight garment, or frequently over a skirt and bodice of some kind. The lamba is also used by mothers for carrying their babies, who rest on their backs, tightly bound inside the garment, which is firmly secured in front. The men of Imerina wear large straw hats, varied by European felt terais, but the women go hatless, although in the towns Japanese sunshades frequently shade the beautifully dressed sleek heads of the Hova ladies.

In no country in the world can there be so many different and elaborate coiffures among the women as in Madagascar. The people of each tribe appear to have a different form of hairdressing, by which, indeed, they can be distinguished, for the elaborate braids and tiny plaits which they affect vary in arrangement accordingly. These braids are treated with castor oil or fat, and once arranged are allowed to remain untouched for many weeks ; except when a woman is in mourning, when her hair is left loose and unbraided, hanging in a long coil down her back.

I was struck by the many children at the "Manifestation", whose parents were French citizens, for they wore topees and European dress, and a large number from the lycées wore their school uniforms. But the general effect of the crowd in the brilliant sunshine was of dazzling white. There was great enthusiasm when Monsieur and Madame Cayla mounted the scarlet dais, from which the former addressed the people, and speeches of thanks were made by both French and Malagasy officials expressing the gratitude of Madagascar for the fine work performed by the Governor and his lady during the past years. The "Mœsseillaise" and a great clapping of hands ended the ceremony, the huge crowd gradually dispersing, while the streets were packed with an amusing variety of vehicles, from the modern motor-car and cycle to the quaint and antiquated horse-drawn wagonettes filled with natives, and gaily painted rickshaws with their energetic runners darting here and there through the crowd with their passengers.

The sight which perhaps lives longest in the memory of most visitors to Tananarive is that of the Zomba (Friday) market held weekly in a large open space down in the centre of the town beyond the public gardens. This great market, one of the largest in the world, is, as a matter of fact, always a busy shopping centre, some of its stalls being permanent, with tiled roofs, and open most days of the week. But Friday is the day of the famous market, when the big square is filled with thousands of

natives who come both to buy and to sell goods from all over the country. Many of the merchants travel in their bullock wagons all night with their loads of vegetables, meat, rice, pottery, straw mats, and baskets, to mention only a few of the varied collection of objects for sale, while women from remote villages are seen arriving with strings of live chickens, ducks, and geese. I was thankful for my dark glasses on the Friday of my visit, for the brilliant sunshine reflected on the white garments of the dense crowd was extremely dazzling to the eyes. The people seemed very cheerful and busy. There was a tremendous sound of chattering, all appearing to be talking at once. These Friday markets are a characteristic of Madagascar, and are held in towns and villages all over the island. They form social meeting-places for the people, who will frequently walk or drive for miles from up-country in order to attend them. This particular market, the most famous of all, appeared to have every conceivable article for sale—from European sunshades, umbrellas, and sewing-machines to native charms for scaring away evil spirits. I was particularly interested in the sellers of charms and mediaeval herbs. They squatted on the pavement, their wares displayed before them on mats, and many and strange were the objects they appeared to be selling, especially the vendors of charms and beads. The Malagasy are very superstitious, and live in constant dread of evil spirits and of the spirits of the dead, who they fear are liable to do them harm, and against which they believe they are protected by certain charms and beads. Certain others of these charms are in demand as a precaution against crocodiles and fever or other ills, and consist sometimes of compounds of vegetable substances or earth, bones, dead insects, etc., wrapped in a cloth and enclosed in a small wooden box hung on a chain and worn round the neck.

A large majority of the Hova tribe and other tribes, as already stated, have now adopted Christianity, but with many of them the old fears and superstitions still linger, and it is not uncommon to see a heathen charm worn in company with a cross, the wearer anxious to take no chances and to be on the safe side !

While in Tananarive the Bishop motored me over one day to see the Theological College and Church of St. Paul at Ambato-haranana, in a beautiful and solitary position, far away up in the foothills, about twelve miles north of the city. The College was founded by the Rev. F. A. Gregory of the Anglican Mission in 1878. In the first instance a primitive building of baked

mud had to serve both for church and lecture hall. Later a house was built for the Warden, in use today by the Bishop, who frequently stays here when preparing the native students for their examinations, and eventually a fine church of grey stone was erected with an adjoining stone building complete with a tower and cloisters for the theological students. The money for these buildings was raised largely by the late Dean of St. Paul's, London, father of the founder. Nearby is a school for the children from the surrounding native villages and for those belonging to the resident Malagasy students. Shady trees of many kinds, planted when the college was first built, have grown up all round, forming a green oasis in the midst of the bare rolling hills. Among these hills, not very far away, the Bishop pointed out a place where heathen rites are still performed, almost within sight of the spire of a little native Christian church, one among many in this part of Imerina, where the Anglican Mission has done fine work among the Hova in spreading Christianity and combating superstition. As a result of the labours of the Mission, an active native church is now established, with its own priests, deacons, and evangelists working all over Imerina and also in the north of the island. But in spite of all this, even among the enlightened Hova, belief in witches and witch doctors abounds, and these persons are held greatly in awe by all. The most trying form of witches are the Mpamasavy, believed to be possessed by evil spirits, who wander about at night making a general nuisance of themselves ; they practise mischief just for the sheer fun of it, banging and scratching on doors, letting the cattle loose, dancing on the tombs ; and occasionally breaking into a house after a death, they will drag out the corpse and pull it into the fields, where they dance around the body, much to the distress of the mourners, who are far too terrified of the Mpamasavy to do anything about it.

Mrs. O'Ferrall told me that, on more than one occasion when staying alone at the college, she herself had heard, in the silence of the night, these so-called witches knocking on the door ; no notice being taken, they would finally go away. Apart from the Mpamasavy, there are many other grades of witches and witch doctors practising throughout the country, some of them claiming to be able to heal the sick. The Bishop told me of an interesting case known to him personally, of a woman belonging to the Sakalava tribe in the north of Madagascar, who had a big and lucrative practice as a witch doctor. She worked with two assistants, and believed herself to be possessed by seven different

spirits, whom she called devils, and whom she thought were evil. She told the Bishop that these spirits controlled her when she went into trance, and helped her in her work of both healing and witchcraft. Their influence was sometimes for good and sometimes for evil. She was helped to go into trance by one of her assistants, who played music and danced before her. Through the influence of a Malagasy attached to the local native Anglican Church this woman became a Christian. She decided to give up her practice as a witch doctor, and, before being baptized, handed over to the Bishop—although this meant a big financial loss—her entire witch's outfit of charms, which, he told me, are now in his possession.

Not far from the College of St. Paul is an interesting walled village, at one time belonging to the Andriana, the nobility of the Hova. The people I saw living here were of dark appearance, and the Bishop told me they belonged to the Hova-vao (New Hova), being the descendants of the released negroid slaves of the former Hova nobles, who at one time had owned this village with its adjoining big house. The whole place was enclosed within massive double walls, built by the slaves, of sun-baked red mud. The bricks used were of huge proportions, forming large square blocks. The strongholds of the Andriana were frequently attacked by enemies, hence the precaution of the double outer walls. The origin of the Andriana is uncertain. I was told they were thought to have been either a separate branch of the original Hova from the Malay States, or they may have been the descendants of the first settlers from Malay.

Near here I was interested to see two of the famous prehistoric cairns, believed to be the burial-places of the Vazimba, the aborigines of Madagascar already referred to in Chapter I, and whose tombs are found among the hills in Imerina. The spirits of the Vazimba are held greatly in reverence and awe by the natives, and are known as the "Little People"; they are said to be seen about the countryside and even occasionally by certain persons staying at the Warden's House at the College, which is believed to be haunted, although in a friendly way, by their ghosts.

Another interesting day was spent at Ambohimanga, the original capital and stronghold of the ancient Hova kings and queens of Madagascar. It lies up in the hills some distance beyond the walled village just described. Leaving Tananarive, a rough road crossed the plain, past green rice fields below the city, towards the mountains. I was struck as usual by the

richness of colour, the deep-red soil, vivid-blue sky, and the many shades of green of the varied vegetation, including silvery grey eucalyptus in contrast to the brighter foliage of palms and banana trees. Leaving the valley, the road wound steeply up into the hills, on the summit of one of which, thickly wooded from the base upwards, we found, after passing through a massive walled gateway, the former palace of the famous Hova Warrior King Andrianimpoinimerina. The Royal Palace proved to be little more than a glorified one-roomed wooden hut, immensely tall, the roof upheld by a huge tree-trunk, planted in the centre of the earthen floor. The king's bed consisted of a high platform erected near the roof and reached by a rough ladder. It is said that he slept thus either as a precaution against assassination or for fear of coming in contact with evil spirits who might be prowling about at night, but who, it was believed, were unable to molest those raised above the level of the ground.

The room has evidently been preserved just as it was when the king left it. In a corner was the original little wooden stool on which he sat, and his three-legged rough wooden table. Five stumps of wood fixed into the mud floor were evidently those which held the cooking-pots. A curious carved divan and a roughly constructed cupboard fixed to the wall completed the furniture of this primitive palace.

Also of interest was an adjoining building, the palace of Queen Ranavalona II, built at a later date, probably about eighty years after, in 1880. The house consisted of a simple wooden bungalow, furnished in complete early-Victorian style, with heavy furniture, antimacassars, crystal chandeliers, Turkey carpets, and elaborately patterned wallpaper. Much of the furniture here and at her large palace in Tananarive was presented to Ranavalona by Queen Victoria, who, as already stated, hearing she had become a Christian, took a great interest in this native queen, sending her many gifts.

The sun was setting when, at five o'clock, we turned homewards, pausing first to enjoy the magnificent panorama, looking down from the heights of Abohimanga across the plain to further mountain ranges of Imerina, and to Tananarive high up on its hilltop, silhouetted against the clear sky. Gradually, as the sun sank below the horizon, the hills changed in colour from the palest mauve and violet to a deep rose, slowly fading until the outline of peaks became a uniform cold grey, and stars lit the sky.

Before leaving Tananarive I enjoyed many such sunsets,

the grandest of all being those seen from the Queen's Palace at the summit of the city hill, from where, to north, south, east, and west, beyond vast panoramas of plain and rice fields, the mountain ranges of the high plateau, with the jagged peaks of Ankaratra, appear for a short space as if on fire, so vivid is the amazing colour of the afterglow.

And what of the Queen's Palace? One reaches it by a stiff climb up a well-made road that passes an oriental-looking building, formerly the palace of the famous old native Prime Minister, Rainitaivivany, who married in turn both Ranavalona II and Ranavalona III, and was said to be the real power behind the throne.

The Queen's Palace stands only a few hundred yards beyond, on the summit of the hill. It was built originally of wood, but has since been encased in stone and turned into a museum. Here one may see many relics of the ancient Hova rulers, including the gorgeous European robes and crowns worn by the different queens, their elaborate carved beds, and their collection of palanquins, some so large and heavy that about twenty slaves were required to carry them on the occasions of long journeys.

Among the personal treasures of Ranavalona II, I was amused to see a large musical box with dolls which performed a dance on the top when the tunes were played. The most interesting of the exhibits, however, is the large Bible presented to her by Queen Victoria. It rests on a small table beside the royal throne.

The ground floor is devoted to natural history specimens, with interesting examples of the fauna of Madagascar, including stuffed varieties of the lemur, and a complete vertebrae of the prehistoric monster dinosaur, said to be the finest in existence.

As described in a previous chapter, it was here, at this palace, that Ranavalona III, the last of the native queens of Madagascar, surrendered to the French on their occupation of the island in 1895, and it is only since that date that the modern section of Tananarive, with its busy town life, shops, cinemas, and railway connecting it with the country, has come into being. Before that time the city, so difficult of access, was visited by scarcely anybody from the outside world, other than intrepid missionaries and traders, who made the long and arduous journey up from the coast by carrying-chair, the only means of travel for everyone in those days; as, indeed, it is still for those who wish to travel through the forests and off the beaten track where roads are either non-existent or impossible for a car.

## CHAPTER IV

## TO ANT SIRABE, AMBOSITRA, AND FIANARANTSOA

BEFORE starting off on my travels across country I had the privilege of an interview with the Governor-General. He was most helpful, and, having read the letter of introduction kindly written on my behalf from the French Embassy in London, promised that I should be given all necessary aid during my journeys. As already stated, I am deeply grateful for the subsequent support I received as a result of this promise from officials all over the country, enabling me to accomplish much which it would have been impossible for me to have attempted otherwise.

In addition to visiting the Tanala tribes, among the hills of the south-east, where I hoped to find, if possible, one of the people's hidden burial-places, I also wished to visit the Antaimoro on the east coast around Manakara, and the Antanosy, Mahafaly, and Vezo Sakalava to the extreme south-east, south, and south-west of the island. My first objective, however, was the forest tribes, and so, after collecting as much information as possible and buying necessary stores, I said good-bye to my friends in Tananarive and started off for the unknown. I had arranged to proceed via Antsirabe and Ambositra to the town of Fianarantsoa, on the high plateau towards the south of the island, and from there to start my journeys into the forest, making first for the village of Fort-Carnot in the centre of the Tanala tribes, where, as Dr. Heim had suggested, the native Administrator of the district would advise me further.

I left Tananarive on a day of golden sunshine and clear blue sky, and was able to go as far as Antsirabe by rail. The little train went sufficiently slowly for one to enjoy to the full the lovely scenery as we climbed up among the hills ; rolling downlands, dotted with grey boulders, valleys with sparkling streams, the brilliant green of rice fields, little wayside villages with their tiny thatched houses of red baked mud, toning with the rich colour of the soil and shaded by banana, mimosa, or eucalyptus trees ; groups of natives with their children waving to us as we passed, some of them running to get a closer glimpse of the train, bullock waggons slowly lumbering along the roadside ; the interest never ceased for the whole of the four-and-a-half-hours' journey to Antsirabe.

The evening was very cold, for we had climbed another

thousand feet since leaving Tananarive, and it was already dark and the stars shining when I arrived at the station of Antsirabe. There was almost a free fight among the rickshaw men as to who should take me and my baggage, but the latter, to my relief, was safely piled at last on to a "pousse-pousse", and with another carrying myself, I soon found we had arrived at the Hotel Terminus, outside the town, where a clean and comfortable room awaited me. The accommodation was in striking contrast to that provided at Tamatave, as indeed it needed to be, for Antsirabe is of special importance to visitors owing to its health-giving springs of water with valuable medicinal qualities. These springs have been utilized to the best advantage by French enterprise, and the well-built baths are frequented by numbers of people yearly, who come from Africa and different parts of Madagascar to take the cure. I now understood the meaning of the gaily coloured posters I had noted with amusement in Tananarive which, translated, read, "Come to Antsirabe, the Vichy of the Indian Ocean !"

The hotel, built after the fashion of an enormous hydro and under French management, was undergoing the process of cleaning and proved to be nearly empty, visitors being scarce in the cold weather ; I thus had the large place to myself, except for one or two invalids recovering from tropical diseases. A slight attack of fever next day hardly served to brighten the depressing atmosphere. All energy had for the time being deserted me, and as I thought of the difficulties which I had been warned I might have to face in the forests my courage sank. By the next day, however, although still suffering from extreme lassitude and a sore throat, I felt better and able to laugh at my fears.

Before continuing southwards, I drove out to the strange and mysterious crater lake of Tritiva, high up in the volcanic hills surrounding Antsirabe. It was a beautiful morning, with a cloudless sky, blazing hot sunshine and a cool nip in the air. The countryside was looking its best. For some miles, until we struck up into the hills, the road was bordered by dense clusters of very tall mimosa trees, varied by eucalyptus and banana. The mimosa was still in bud with little colour ; the effect later when it is in full flower is something to be wondered at, for, if travelling on the road at that time, one appears to be passing through a forest of gold.

Tritiva is of much interest to geologists and has sometimes been described as unfathomable. The late James Sibree, however, in his book *A Naturalist in Madagascar*, published in 1915,

points out that the lake was sounded a few years after his visit by the Rev. J. Johnson of the Norwegian-Lutheran Mission, who found that the deepest portion was 474 feet in depth. As I stood on the brink of the crater's ridge, where the steep rocky slopes drop sheer down for about fifty feet to the greenish dark water far below, the silent and eerie feeling of the place reminded me of Lake Corrusk in the Isle of Skye. Sibree judges the lake to be about 800 to 900 feet long and 50 feet wide. Tritiva is said to be full of alligators, but none were to be seen on this occasion, in spite of stones thrown down into the water by my native driver to attract their attention.

The following day I was off by eight o'clock for Ambositra, the next stage of my journey to Fianarantsoa. I had booked a seat by the driver in a small native wagonette car, my baggage being packed behind in company with four other passengers, all of whom were Malagasy. The brightness of the morning added to the loveliness of the scenery through which we passed. As usual, the richly coloured red soil, reminding me of Devonshire, was in vivid contrast to the bright green of the rice fields, the soft silvery greys of the mimosa and eucalyptus foliage, and the long glossy leaves of the banana trees, varied by cactus or palm. In spite of the approaching winter I noticed quantities of wild flowers; patches of yellow, blue, mauve, and starry white. Most beautiful were the bushes of wild roses, massed on either side of the road and shading from palest to deepest pink, while ahead and all round, encircling the horizon, were the ranges of hills, wild and rugged, with deep clefts, their green slopes dotted with huge grey boulders.

We passed through several villages of red mud houses, outside which women were busily pounding grain, while covered waggons drawn by hump-backed bullocks were being driven slowly along the dusty road, or were resting by the wayside, and groups of copper-skinned natives, with crimson or orange lambas in place of the more usual white, gave life and colour to the scene. My driver drove at breakneck speed, but he was skilful, and in spite of hairpin bends and hazardous roads we reached Ambositra with no mishap. After dropping the other passengers in the village, he landed me at the Benedictine Convent of French nuns, who have a mission school here, and with whom I had been invited to spend a few days before continuing my journey to Fianarantsoa.

The convent and church at Ambositra were built quite recently and occupy a fine position in the hills, with lovely views

of the valley and mountains beyond. The simple and well-planned convent furniture has all been made by the local Malagasy, including the hand-woven material of the curtains. I was met and welcomed by one of the Mothers, who, according to custom, took me first into the church, after which she showed me to my little room. It was spotlessly clean, with a small oil lamp, there being no electric light here. Lunch, the principal meal of the day, was served at 11.30. I found there were two other guests besides myself, the parents of one of the nuns. I was soon to find out that the father, a distinguished looking man of middle age, was no less a personage than the famous French actor and member of the Comédie Française, Jacques Corpeau. That morning, before my arrival, he had given a recital of "Hamlet" for the benefit of the Mother Superior and the rest of the community, a pleasant diversion from their usual routine! I gathered the Mother Superior was a woman of great intellectual ability, and was responsible for the valuable and varied collection of books in the large library.

In the afternoon I called on an Englishman and his sister from Mauritius (Mr. and Miss Hanning), who for many years have lived in Ambositra and who knew Madagascar in the old days when there were no roads and one depended entirely upon native transport. Here I met also the French doctor of the local hospital, by whom I was urged to take regular doses of quinine, from five to ten grains daily, owing to the danger of malarial fever both in the forests and along the coast where I should be travelling. I decided to take his advice and buy a good supply of tablets at Fianarantsoa. Supper at the convent was at six o'clock, when the gates were locked for the night, so I had to hurry back for the evening meal, which I had with Monsieur and Madame Corpeau. We were making our way back through the cloisters to our rooms, conducted by one of the Sisters with a candle, when there was a startled cry from Monsieur Corpeau and excited little shrieks of laughter from the nun, for a mouse had run up inside one of the former's trouser-legs! After a series of desperate contortions on the part of the actor, the mouse was finally retrieved, after it had been stunned, I gathered, against his back. I have little doubt that this incident will live for long in the annals of the convent and provide frequent source of amusement for those cloistered there!

As no conversation was encouraged after 7.30 p.m., guests at the convent retired very early; they also rose early, being expected to attend Mass each morning at 6.45. I succeeded

in rousing myself at dawn and, with the help of my electric torch, found my way outside to the church. There was a heavy mist, it was cold and damp, and I was glad of warm clothes. It happened to be Ascension Day ; the Benedictines are famous for their music, and the unaccompanied singing of the nuns was exquisite. The service was attended by a number of Malagasy Christians. Among the women were some young novitiates wearing their white confirmation veils.

We breakfasted at 7.30 on brown bread, honey from the convent bees, and coffee, after which I set out to explore the countryside and take some photographs. To my disappointment, I was unable to go far, my feverish attack at Antsirabe having left me so weak and tired that walking even a short distance was an effort, and in addition I was still suffering from a bad sore throat, which I was anxious to get rid of before starting off the following week for my first long forest journey. Fortunately, by the next morning, when I was due to leave for Fianarantsoa, I was beginning to feel better. I dressed and packed at six o'clock, attended Mass with the Corpeaus, and, after breakfast, said good-bye to the Mother Superior and to a sweet-faced nun who occupied herself especially with looking after the convent guests, and who told me she was rather apprehensive at the thought of my setting out to travel alone through the forests. "We are all going to pray for you during your journey that you may have a safe return," were her parting words. And so, with the blessing of the kind Mothers, I left the comfortable shelter of their peaceful retreat and followed my luggage, wheeled on a couple of small hand-barrows, to the station of the transud, the public mail bus which travels south twice a week, and by which I had arranged to motor to Fianarantsoa.

The camian (baggage bus) was the first to arrive, and took most of my luggage in advance. The passenger bus appeared in a whirl of dust at 9 a.m., having come from Antsirabe. It was roomy, with comfortable seating accommodation and large windows, easily opened, and shaded with sun-blinds along each side. Unlike British East and South Africa, where a separate conveyance is supplied for Europeans, here in Madagascar there is no separation of blacks and whites, and I found this bus full of natives. A quick glance round made me grateful for a small tin of Keating's powder, which, following advice, I had put in my coat pocket. I was fortunate in getting a front seat next the door. The company are considerate to Europeans

and reserve for them the two front seats when possible. On this occasion the second of these seats was occupied by a Frenchman. After a while I noticed a Malagasy woman, who, with her husband, was sitting just behind me, for the seats were very close together. The woman appeared to be ill; she had a blanket over her head and was moaning and bending down behind the back of my seat. She kept this position so long that, at last, rather concerned, I enquired of the Frenchman if he knew what was wrong. "*Mal de mer*. Sea-sick in Engleeseh," he replied laconically. "Same word." Hastily removing my small baggage from beneath the seat to a safer position, I leaned forward and hoped for the best. Happily the woman was not actually sick, although appearing always on the verge of being so.

The road to Fianarantsoa followed grand scenery, winding high up and down steep hillsides, through green and luxuriant forest country, and climbing up into the mountains, reaching, at one point, an altitude of nearly 8,000 feet. Here were rolling green hills with grey boulders, sparkling streams, and quantities of bracken. One could almost imagine oneself among the Welsh hills, until the illusion was dispelled by the road dipping suddenly into a wooded valley with tropical vegetation, taking one back at once to the Far East. At one point yet another change; we might have been passing through a Devonshire lane. The road, which had narrowed and was dropping steeply down through woods, was bordered on either side by high banks of rich red earth covered with a wealth of greenery; giant ferns of many varieties, moss and lichen. The countryside for long distances was mainly unpopulated, but now and then villages and hamlets of red mud afforded a colourful contrast to their green surroundings.

About mid-day we had an hour's halt at a pretty village with an inn, where I managed to get a meal of sorts, and later during the afternoon we reached Fianarantsoa, after Tananarive the principal town of the interior, on the high plateau. Like the former, its tiled houses and narrow cobbled streets are built high up on a hillside as a precaution originally against invaders, and overlook, from an altitude of 5,000 feet or more, a vast expanse of valleys and forest far below.

The Hotel Terminus, where I had booked a room, is under French management, and I found the manager was a brother of the proprietor of the big hotel at Antsirabe. I found it an excellent little inn, simple but clean, and the food good. After tea I found my way to the office of the Chef de Region, the

Governor official of the district, and told him of the journey I hoped to make among the Tanala tribes. Monsieur Poupon had already received news of my impending arrival from the Government at Tananarive, and he told me that on the following Tuesday, May 23, the necessary number of bearers and a filanzana had been ordered to await me at Manampatrana, a little wayside station about halfway down the line on the recently constructed mountain railway, which drops down from Fianarantsoa to the east coast at Manakara. From Manampatrana I was to proceed through the forest to the Tanala village of Fort-Carnot up in the hills, where Monsieur Mandimbilaza, the native administrator, would advise me further. It was necessary for me, however, to find a boy who spoke a little French to accompany me as personal servant and to act as interpreter with the natives. Only three days remained to find him and the task was not easy, men of one tribe being as a rule unwilling to leave their homes and venture among people with customs, in all probability, different from their own.

Fianarantsoa is the centre of the Betsileo tribe, who inhabit the high plateau south of the Hova. After the latter, these people are the most numerous and important, numbering over half a million, and have developed more in education and religion than most. The London Missionary Society and the Norwegian and American-Lutheran Missions have done, and are doing, fine work amongst them, as also are the Roman Catholics.

I was interested to see that the appearance of the Betsileo was entirely different from the Hova. Their hair, unlike the latter, was frizzy instead of smooth, their skins much darker, and their features somewhat negroid. The origin of these people is obscure. Dr. Sibree, in his book *Things Seen in Madagascar*, suggests that in all probability they are not in any way connected with Africa, but more likely with the New Hebrides, Fiji, and other islands of Western Polynesia.

As in Imerina, so in the Betsileo province rice cultivation is the main industry; the wide and beautiful valley south of Ambositra through which I had passed on my way to Fianarantsoa, with its terraced hills and cleverly constructed water-courses, showing evidence of great skill and industry.

During this and subsequent visits to Fianarantsoa, between my forest journeys, I received much kind hospitality from Monsieur and Madame Basset. Monsieur Basset, the manager of an important French commercial company in the town, had

lived for many years in Madagascar, and gave me much interesting information. On one occasion I accompanied him to a weekly market about ten miles out in the country, where large quantities of rice was being sold. It was an amazing sight when, at a given signal at mid-day, thousands of pounds of rice was poured out in huge piles, upon mats laid ready on the ground. For the next hour, the rice was being feverishly sold and weighed, to be taken away later by purchasers in large straw baskets, which they carried on their heads, to their homes and villages, some of which were far distant.

On our way back to Fianarantsoa I was interested to see, near the roadside, several Betsileo family tombs. These were somewhat similar in appearance to the tombs of the Hova, which I had seen in Imerina, and, like them, were surmounted by piles of large stones. Like all the Malagasy, the Betsileo are very superstitious, attach great importance to burial customs, and are invariably afraid of the spirits of the dead. In common with the Hova, they practise the strange custom of bone-turning, in these days restricted by the Government for hygienic reasons to the winter months of August and September. During this period the relations of the deceased walk in procession to the tombs. The graves are opened and the bodies wrapped in new hand-woven lambas, made for the occasion from fine spiders' silk.

Monsieur Basset told me that he had asked a native what was the reason for this strange act. The man replied that it was an important custom, and was done in order that the spirits should not feel the cold, and, in consequence, come and haunt their relations. The ceremony is performed once for each person, and in the case of a rich Malagasy is made the occasion for a big feast, important French officials often receiving invitations to be present at the luncheon ! So ingrained is the custom that even after a man has become a Christian he will still continue to follow it on occasions. The Government has now forbidden bone-turning until a year after death, and the ceremony is highly taxed. It is thus hoped to reduce this unhealthy practice, which often results in epidemics of plague, owing to the number of rats overrunning the country as a result of the yearly opening of the graves.

I had been in Fianarantsoa three days, and up to the last afternoon before starting off for the forest I was still without a native servant to accompany me, and was fearing I must go without, when Madame Basset most kindly insisted on lending me one of her house-boys. His name was Rakoto ; he was young



RICE CULTIVATION AT AMBOSITRA (*see p. 47*)



FOREST TRACK, BEYOND FORT-CARNOT (*see p. 71*)



THE AUTHOR IN HER FILANZANA (*see* p. 52)



THE AUTHOR'S PORTERS (*see* p. 51)

and strong, but spoke only a word or two of French. Even a word or two was better than nothing, however, and I gratefully accepted his services.

The morning had been spent in final necessary purchases: extra candles, matches, quinine, biscuits, tea, sugar, tins of sardines, a new battery for my electric torch, and a large native umbrella used for both sun and rain, and without which no one ventures on a filanzana journey. All of these articles I was able to buy at a useful general store in the town. Three Malagasy native baskets, roped and easily carried on poles, bought at the market at Tananarive, took all my stores. My washing basin and cooking utensils, my bedding, clothing, and mosquito-net were packed into a large waterproof hold-all, a waterproof case protected my folding camp-bed, two rucksacks for my films and cameras, a small waterproof hold-all bag for sponge-bag, mirror, comb, medicines, and torch, and an extra basket with thermos flask for wayside lunches, completed my equipment. I had arranged to leave my suitcases and all belongings that I should not require while on trek in the care of the hotel proprietor, to await my return, for Fianarantsoa was to be my base for the time being.

All was now in readiness for the start off of my adventure, and my one hope when I went to bed that night was for fine weather on the morrow, for I had just heard that for some days past there had been a spell of heavy rain down in the forests towards the coast. As the success of my photographs would depend largely on climatic conditions, I anxiously hoped for the best.

## CHAPTER V

### I START FOR THE FOREST

I WAS up soon after five o'clock the next morning, after less than three hours' sleep. It was, I feared, very misty, but too dark as yet to see much. After some hot coffee I found my boy, Rakoto, waiting for me on the verandah outside my room, and helped him carry my baggage on to the pavement, to await the arrival of Monsieur Basset, who had kindly promised to call for me with his car and see me off. The excitement of the forthcoming journey seemed to have had the result of making Rakoto forget completely his small knowledge of French, and his replies to me consequently relapsed into his native Malagash, or ended in broad, shy grins.

A grey dawn was breaking when, the car having arrived, Monsieur Basset drove me to the station and I boarded the little train which was starting off for its bi-weekly journey down to the coast. This single-line, narrow-gauge railway, which runs from Fianarantsoa down to Manakara, a distance of 162 kilometres, was opened in March 1936, and, like that from Tamatave up to Tananarive, is a wonderful feat of engineering. By means of sixteen tunnels it cuts through massive walls of rock in the hillsides as it winds its steep way down from the high plateau towards the sea.

As is usual in these early winter mornings up in the mountains, it was rather cold. There was a thick damp mist with light rain, and I could only dimly distinguish the densely wooded hills on either side of the line, thick jungle becoming tropical as we reached the lower altitude, with gigantic crags—sheer walls of rock—looming out of the fog, while everywhere the tangled undergrowth or fern-covered banks along the line were covered with a filmy maze of countless spiders' webs glistening with moisture. At one point one caught what should have been a magnificent view of a vast forested valley far below with further hills beyond, but it was all shrouded in mist, and as a result impossible to see anything clearly. Peering out on the eerie effect of the veiled forms of rocks, hills, and jungles, now appearing, now vanishing, through the fog, I found myself wondering once again, with a slight feeling of apprehension, if what I had been warned to expect during my coming forest journeys would turn out to be true. I hoped not ! Missionaries and others had drawn gloomy pictures of drenching rain, hordes of mosquitoes, risks of malarial fever, leeches, countless spiders, snakes, centipedes and scorpions ; but, worst of all by far, to my mind, *rats* ! "You must be prepared," they had said, "to find the native villages and huts in which you will have to sleep overrun at night with rats. If, however, you are careful to tuck your mosquito-net well under your mattress around your camp bed, you should be all right." As I have never been able to get over an extreme repulsion, amounting almost to a morbid dread, of rats, I found the prospect of meeting them at such close quarters far from pleasing, and wondered gloomily how I should face the ordeal when the time came. My chief concern for the moment, however, was whether I should find my bearers and filanzana waiting for me, as arranged at Manampatrana, where we were due to arrive at 9 a.m.

It was getting on for that hour now. The mist was lifting

at last, and soon it gave place to bright sunshine and a clear blue sky, revealing a marvellous panorama. On the one side of the line a steep hillside backed by precipitous cliffs; on the other, shelving down and away as far as eye could see, across wide stretches of valley far below, a veritable sea of virgin forest, unbroken until on the horizon it lost itself in the blue distance, where a range of mountains was faintly discernible against the sky. My spirits rose with the warm sunshine, and by the time we drew up at the little station of Manampatrana I was feeling quite ready for anything and everything, even the rats, and prepared to enjoy every minute of the adventure.

With Rakoto's help I succeeded in getting my baggage off the train, all but my new large sun-umbrella, which, as ill luck would have it, got left behind. All I had with me was a small, but strong, orange cotton sunshade, which, with the added protection of my topee and dark glasses, was quite sufficient for the sun, but would be useless after several hours of heavy tropical rain. At the moment, however, there seemed small likelihood of the latter, for there was every indication of a beautiful day, brilliant sunshine and a cloudless sky.

On leaving the platform I looked anxiously round for my men. Would they be there? Yes, I soon found them, standing in a row waiting for me, with the carrying-chair. Twelve sturdy Tanala tribesmen, eight for myself and four for the baggage, which was swung along the middle of two long bamboo poles and secured with rope. Each pole was carried by a couple of men, the ends resting on their shoulders. My filanzana, a small wooden chair with arms and a swinging foot-rest, was slung in the centre of two poles, each pole supported at either end on the shoulders of two men. Thus I had four to carry me and four others to relieve them at intervals of every few minutes. Among the porters was an extra man who spoke a little French, and who explained that he had been sent with the rest from Fort Carnot, by Monsieur Mandimbilaza, the native Chef de Canton, Administrator of the district, two days' journey away, who was expecting me and who was responsible for the bearers. It was a relief to find this man spoke French, for the few words of Malagash I had learned were quite inadequate for coping with the porters, and Rakoto, although helpful in other ways, was useless as an interpreter. While the baggage was being tied on to the poles I was offered a basketful of what at first I thought were enormous live beetles. I then realized that the creatures must be locusts, and were being presented to me as a gift and a delicacy.

The mere sight of the writhing mass made me feel sick, and as for making a meal off them—that was impossible ; so, while expressing my thanks as best I could, I made it quite clear that I could not eat locusts ! The native who had given them to me sadly shook his head, seeming surprised and rather disappointed. I hope he ate and enjoyed them himself later.

By now the baggage was fixed up and carried on ahead, while I climbed into my chair and prepared to enjoy my first experience of travel by filanzana. As soon as I was seated I was hoisted up on to the shoulders of my four men, who started off cheerfully at a jog-trot. The motion at first was not unpleasant, for the men were evenly matched, but after a moment or two they were replaced by the remaining four, one of which was much shorter than the rest ; consequently I was jolted along at an uneven angle, until tossed back again on to the shoulders of the first set of men, and then back again to the others, and so on for the rest of the journey, shaken about like a pea in a pod.

I wondered at first what the effect of this mode of travel for several hours on end would be, for I have been warned by missionaries that I should probably feel very sick until I had got accustomed to it, Europeans suffering badly in this way at the start of a journey. I must say, however, that, except for feeling a little tired and bruised at the end of the day, I never once experienced the slightest ill-effects during any of my journeys ; not even when my porters in a sudden exuberance of spirits would relapse into a curious prancing step, bending low down and then up again, or else with a sudden spurt forward run for a few yards before tossing me on to the shoulders of the relief party, who would be trotting just in front of them. They invariably accomplished this difficult feat without slowing their pace, so that one was forced on these occasions to cling on to the arms of the chair, or one would have been jolted out. On the whole I found this strange means of locomotion very amusing and not nearly so exhausting as it sounds, for after a while one found it possible to adapt oneself to the movement and so instinctively save unnecessary jolting, and when the men started their prancing movement, usually on approaching a village, when they liked to show off, I learned to call "*Mora! Mora!*" (Go slower ! Go slower !) This at once had a sobering effect, and they would go steadily again.

The track followed along a wooded valley and was good and comparatively level as far as the village of Imbatofotsz, a cluster of native bamboo huts, in the largest of which, used as a Govern-

ment Rest Hut, I set up my camp bed, cooked my evening meal of eggs and tea, and, tired out, slept soundly till dawn. Then off once more for the day's trek to Fort-Carnot, from where I hoped to travel up into the mountains and visit the remote hilltop villages of the little-known tribes of the Tanala Ikongo. After an hour or two the valley narrowed, with high forest-clad hills on either side, the track following a stream for much of the way. By mid-day the heat and glare of the sun was intense, and I was thankful for my dark glasses and orange sunshade, although the latter, without the protection of my solar topee, would have been useless.

Early in the afternoon I was surprised to see a little procession coming towards me along the valley—eight bearers and a filanzana, carrying a Malagasy gentleman in European dress who sat beneath the shade of a huge umbrella. When his porters reached me they put down the chair, and the native gentleman stepped out, introducing himself to me in excellent French as Monsieur Mandimbilaza, the Chef de Cantons Government official for the district. He explained that he had come to welcome me to Fort-Carnot, having received orders from the Government at Tananarive to give me all the necessary help and advice I needed towards my forthcoming journey. Having thanked him, I showed him my letter of introduction from the Governor-General and also one from Dr. Heim, the French naturalist and explorer, with whom I had corresponded about the Tanala tribes and who had spoken of his visit to Fort-Carnot and of the help he had himself received from Monsieur Mandimbilaza, to whom he sent his warm greetings. The latter was delighted at receiving this message, evidently holding Dr. Heim in great regard.

We now wended our way in single file up into the hills, to the valley of Fort-Carnot, the track becoming very steep as we neared the summit of the wooded hill upon which stands the Government Rest Hut, Monsieur Mandimbilaza's bungalow, and the little post-office of the district, of which he himself is in charge. I learned that Monsieur Mandimbilaza was a descendant of the late native King of the Tanala. He has been wisely given by the French Government this post of authority among his own people, who still speak of him as "The King", and regard him with great respect.

"Tanala" means "People of the Forest", and applies not to one particular tribe but to various groups who have entered the territory from time to time and have lived in the district for

several generations. I learned that there were two main divisions—the Tanala Menabe, who occupy the more northern forests, and the more primitive Tanala Ikongo, among whom I was to travel, away up in the hills beyond Fort-Carnot. These people proudly claim that they were never conquered by the Hova. Their tiny villages of bamboo huts built on hilltops were easily defended against invaders, and in times of emergency the people were able to take refuge on the lofty and somewhat inaccessible mountain of Ikongo, from which they take their name. The summit of this mountain, about five miles long, is level, with springs of water which made rice cultivation possible, thus providing food during sieges.

In common with Amdomdroumbi, a forest-covered mountain in the lower Tanala territory, Mount Ikongo is considered sacred by the primitive people of the district, and is supposed to be inhabited by the spirits of the dead, who are invariably held in great awe and reverence by the people. One of the little-known hill villages I was especially anxious to visit was quite near this mountain and was called Antarambongo. Monsieur Mandimbilaza warned me that this village, hidden away in the fastness of the hills, was extremely difficult to reach, and many steep and precipitous slopes would have to be climbed on the way. He had never visited it himself, and, so far as he knew, the only European to have gone there was Dr. Heim, the French explorer, on his visit seven years ago. Since then it had been visited by no one from the outside world, and never by a white woman. For this reason he thought it advisable to send an armed soldier with me, although he explained this was more for prestige than anything else, the Tanala Ikongo being a most honest and friendly people in every way and quite harmless. Jean, the soldier he provided, belonged himself to the tribe, but, having been to France for his military service, was comparatively educated, spoke good French, and proved invaluable as an interpreter.

## CHAPTER VI

### AMONG THE TANALA TRIBES

THERE was a torrential rainstorm soon after my arrival at the Rest Hut at Fort-Carnot, and more rain during the night, but the next morning, except for heavy mist at dawn, it was fine.

Rakoto called me at 5 a.m., bringing a jug of cold water from the river. After washing and dressing by candlelight, eating some biscuits and a banana, and making myself some tea, I helped him pack my camp bed and string up the baskets. By 6.45 the porters had securely fixed all my baggage on to the carrying-poles under the direction of Jean, the soldier, who, barefooted, wore a military khaki coat over his baggy white trousers, a scarlet fez, and a rifle with fixed bayonet slung over his shoulder. He was a cheerful soul and got on well with the porters, to whom he chattered gaily in their own language. He told me he had accompanied Dr. Heim on this same journey, but bore out Monsieur Mandimbilaza's statement that no one had been on the route since.

And so, seen off by the Chef de Canton and some natives from the village below, I started on my journey to the sacred Mountain of Ikongo and the primitive people who live on and around its slopes. The mist still enshrouded the hills, the early-morning air was cool, and I was glad of my weatherproof khaki coat and tweed skirt and jumper. In addition I wore long soft leather mosquito boots reaching well above the knee—a necessity for forest travel, not only as a safeguard against the hordes of mosquitoes and leeches, but also to protect one's legs from the dense and often dripping wet and prickly undergrowth through which one frequently passed.

Soon after leaving Fort-Carnot the sun broke through the clouds and the mist lifted, revealing magnificent mountain scenery all around. At first we followed along the shore of a river that flowed through a narrow valley with high sparsely wooded hills on either side. Our route lay across this river, and as there was no bridge and the water was too deep for fording, my caravan had to cross in stages on a raft, a very frail and shaky affair composed of a dozen or so bamboo poles, lashed together with bands of creeper. Two extra men had been added to my twelve porters, so instead of eight to carry me in relays of four, I had ten, the two extra men being needed for relieving the rest on account of the precipitous nature of the hills up which we should be climbing. The baggage, being light, was easily carried by the remaining four on two poles, two men for each pole. With so large a personnel, the crossing of the river took some while, the raft only taking three persons at a time, apart from the ferryman. I was the first to cross with Jean and one of the porters. I was told there were crocodiles in this river, but there would be little danger of their

appearing, as they get active only in the hot weather, becoming sluggish and sleeping under water most of the winter months.

Midway across the river the water began to ooze through the poles of the raft, half of which had become slightly submerged. I balanced as best I could on the dry end, with the help of Jean, who held my arm. Before reaching the shore the raft struck a mud-bank and stuck in shallow water. In order that I should not get wet Jean carried me on his back the remaining few yards. The raft was then ferried back for my chair, baggage, and the rest of the porters, who made the crossing in relays.

At last all were safely ashore, the baggage re-slung upon the carrying-poles, and we were ready to start off again, the track leading sharply up into the hills. Just as I was about to step into my filanzana a young native, a Tanala, approached and, after saluting me with a low bow, offered me a live fowl and a bunch of bananas, refusing payment. Thanking him, I accepted the bananas but refused the fowl, as I had no easy means of cooking it. Jean told me afterwards that I ought not to have refused the gift, as the man, who was the son of the present "King" of the tribe, would have been disappointed. "Never refuse anything that may be offered you in future," he added. I said I was very sorry if I had unwittingly hurt the young man's feelings, and made a mental note to accept everything that might be brought me in future.

The hard part of the day's trek now began. My porters were wonderful. They appeared quite tireless, and climbed like goats, carrying me in my chair with apparent ease up precipitous, rocky tracks covered with loose stones and then down again to valleys below. It is true I am small and a very light weight, but nevertheless I marvelled at their agility. While negotiating these steep slopes, I was at times tilted right back, and at others so much forward that I found myself standing upright on the swinging foot-rest, and was forced to cling to the chair-arms to prevent myself falling out. There were many streams, some of them foaming torrents, through deep defiles, which had to be crossed by means of one, or sometimes two, tree-trunks laid casually across. But, nothing daunted, the barefooted porters, with steady balance and changing on these occasions to single file, invariably landed me safely on the other side. And so on, up and down for hours, over one hill after another, and through densely wooded valleys, where the forest scenery was a fairyland of palms, giant ferns, and bamboo of all

kinds, the track sometimes appearing to pass through a tunnel of green where the branches met and interlaced overhead.

Of particular beauty was a very tall palm which grows in one long slender stem, crowned with fringes of delicate green leaves which bend gracefully over, like the lash of a whip. These feathery trees were in striking contrast to others of dark and heavier foliage, and to the dense surrounding undergrowth and dwarf shrubs of many varieties, intertwined with trailing masses of grey lichen and covered with moss of all kinds.

Had it not been for the fact that my porters kept up an incessant chatter, telling each other stories and folk-tales—a favourite habit of theirs and calculated, as they think, to scare away evil spirits—I should have been struck, as I was on other occasions, by the uncanny stillness of the forest, the apparent absence of animal life and the scarcity of birds. On the other hand, there was abundance of insect life; the air was full of gorgeous butterflies and huge dragonflies of brilliant colours, while the undergrowth and sometimes the track was netted over with the fine silky webs of countless spiders of all kinds and sizes. Fortunately there appeared to be no leeches in these parts of the forest, although I suffered from the pests on other occasions.

As already mentioned, practically no wild game is found in the jungles of Madagascar, and the snakes are not, as a rule, dangerous; but among the spiders there is one in particular whose bite is said by the natives to cause almost instant death. This spider, probably similar to that called the "black widow" which can be seen in the London Zoo, is globular in shape, shining black in colour, and about the size of a small marble. Its legs are black, like its body, but it has a small red spot on the abdomen. Fortunately I never came across it, but of other specimens I saw many, some of immense size, the legs of which are said to spread over a circle of six or seven inches in diameter. Their bodies, as described by Sibree, have the appearance of small crabs. One had to beware also of scorpions and centipedes, while hornets were troublesome in certain parts. Wild cats were said to exist, although I never saw any. Almost the only animals of importance in the forests are the lemurs, peculiar to the island, and of which there are forty species. They are very hard to find, as they live high up in the tree-tops, but I was fortunate in coming across some of them later on in a forest belt in the south of the island. One of the most curious features of the upper and lower forests is the number of enormous ants'

nests, some as large as footballs, built in the branches of trees. I saw many such. They appeared to be formed of dark-brown earthy matter, and were full, I learned, of a small black ant.

At intervals the track we followed would emerge from the green dimness of the forest out into bright sunlight, as we crossed valleys surrounded with high wooded hills, up which we had to climb. In one of these valleys we stopped at a tiny village—just a few bamboo huts—for a rest of an hour and a half. The Chief came to meet me, and I was presented with a gift of bananas, rice, and another live chicken. This time I received it smilingly, although I did not know what I should do with the unfortunate bird, which, with its feet tied together, was carried head downwards by one of my porters. Later I told him to kill it.

While my porters were having their meal of rice, cooked for them in a big iron pot by a woman in the village, I rested and ate my lunch, which I carried with me—tinned tongue, vitaweat bread, and bananas—and very ready I was for it after my early seven o'clock breakfast of tea and biscuits. I had been careful to boil the drinking-water I carried in my Army water-bottle before starting off that morning, as it came from the river.

The weather was getting very hot now, and I was glad to sit in the shade inside one of the village huts, lent me for the occasion. Clean rush mats had been laid down for me to sit upon; there were, of course, no chairs of any kind, these being unknown to the Tanala folk, although they sometimes use low stools made, like the mats, of raffia. There were two of these stools in this hut, one of which I was glad to use as a table for my food, as the wooden floor beneath the clean mats was evidently alive with ants, judging by the number that quickly appeared as if from nowhere. When clean mats are laid down as a floor covering, the dirty ones beneath are seldom removed, hence the meaning of the term "hypocrite" in the Malagasy Bible, which word, literally translated, means "To make clean by spreading a new mat."

Rested and refreshed, my porters and I started away again, seen off by the whole village, after I had managed with difficulty to take a few photographs of some of the people, who were very shy and would run away if they saw my camera. After several more hours of travel, during which time we were slowly climbing higher into the mountains through wild and magnificent scenery, passing on our way the sacred mountain of Ikongo, from which the section of the Tanala tribe I was visiting take their name,

I began to feel somewhat weary. Dusk was falling when, to my relief, I saw silhouetted against the sky, on a distant ridge, a cluster of tiny bamboo huts—Antarambongo at last, the hill village for which I was making, and which, translated, means "place of many bugs" (general term for insects in this area). As we drew nearer I saw a crowd of people watching our approach from the hillside, and others were running to join them. The entire population had turned out to see my arrival, the news somehow having spread that a white woman was coming to visit them. Jean shouldered his rifle, squared his shoulders and marched in front of my porters, proudly leading the way into the village. The people gazed at me in awed silence, under which I sensed suppressed excitement, and then, as the chair was lowered and I stepped out, the women, apparently scared, ran away and hid in their huts. The men, however, showed no such shyness, and crowded around smiling and talking to Jean, while their Chief, with a low bow, presented me with the now familiar offering of a bag of rice, eggs, and yet another chicken. Expressing my thanks through Jean, I gave the gifts into the hands of my porters, and after Jean had talked for a few minutes with the head man, I was taken to one of the people's one-roomed huts which had been placed at my disposal for the night. Jean said he would be sleeping opposite and was within call should I need him.

Rakoto then helped me bring my bedding and baggage inside the hut, the walls of which were of bamboo flattened out and plaited together, the cracks filled in with dried palm leaves, while the roof was thatched thickly with the same. As it was now winter in the tropics and comparatively cold at night up here in the hills, the walls were lined with rush mats fastened up with bamboo pins. The wooden floor, raised on four posts a foot or so from the ground and reached by a few steps, was also covered with mats, except for a small hollowed-out space to one side where, beneath the hut, bamboo planks supported a block of earth rising to the level of the floor and covered with some large flat stones, thus forming a rough cooking-place. I noticed here the smouldering remains of a wood fire over which, suspended from rafters in the ceiling, hung a big iron cooking-pot. As there was no opening in the roof for the smoke, long festoons of black soot trailed down from the rafters and had to be carefully dodged! A Malagasy expression for old age is "To be black with soot", the old people seldom leaving their hut and its fire, and consequently getting perpetually covered

with soot. The room had no window ; there were, however, a couple of entrances, one on either side. These had no doors, but instead a heavy plaited straw screen was fitted to rest over the opening at night, or when it was desired to close the house. A leather thong, attached to the inside centre of the screen, its other end being fastened to a stick wedged across the jambs on the outside, was, I found, the only and somewhat inadequate way of fastening these makeshift doors. I noticed that the household goods and cooking utensils were placed on a couple of wooden shelves, one above the other as high as possible, near the roof ; this as a precaution against rats, with which these huts are usually overrun. There was no furniture except a couple of small raffia stools, one of which I decided to use for a table.

As soon as Rakoto had brought in my baggage I set up my camp bed and mosquito-net, carefully tucking in the latter around my sleeping-bag and rug, so that no insects could get inside them. This, I found, was most important and was always the first thing to be done on arriving at one of these huts for the night.

While I was busy with this, a number of hens came clucking into the room, presumably to look for scraps of food. They were followed by the Chief's wife, who, unable any longer to restrain her curiosity, overcame her shyness and, squatting on the floor, watched me with absorbed interest, running her fingers along the brass rod supports of the mosquito-net and giving little exclamations of surprise and pleasure. I had brought with me a large number of Woolworth's coloured bead necklaces as presents for the people, and, taking a couple out of one of my rucksacks, I gave them to her. She was delighted, and after volubly expressing her thanks—or so I imagined, for I could not, of course, understand what she was saying—she ran outside to show the gift to her neighbours, and I was left in peace to cook my evening meal. This I had to do by the light of a candle, for it was now about 5.30 and dusk was falling ; night sets in very early in the tropical winter, especially in the forests.

By the time I had prepared and finished my supper of tea, boiled eggs, and bananas it was quite dark, and with the help of Jean, who came when I called him, I set up the screen doors and shut myself in for the night. Sitting on the edge of my camp bed, I had just finished writing up my diary and was thinking of settling down to sleep, there being nothing else I could do, when I heard the beating of tom-toms and the sound of people

singing. This went on for so long that at last I decided to look outside and see where it came from. Pushing aside the screen door, I went down the steps and out into the village street, if such the space between the two long rows of huts which made up the village could be called. I found that all the people, both men and women, had assembled a short distance to the right of my hut. I held my lighted electric torch, and when they saw me they gave a shout and, forming themselves into a long procession and led by two male dancers, the latter naked except for loin-cloths, beating tom-toms, and swinging rattles, they processed past me down to the end of the village and then back again, where they formed themselves in a big semicircle in front of my hut. Mounting the steps, I stood just inside the doorway feeling a little uncertain what I should do, when I saw, rather to my relief, that Jean was pushing his way through the crowd towards me.

"Do not go inside," he whispered. "There is nothing to fear. It is important that you stay where the people can see you, for they are about to sing and dance in your honour. They will not like it if you go away. They have been waiting all this long while for you to come out of the hut ; now you must stay where you are."

I told him I had no wish to do otherwise and would be greatly interested to see the dance. Meanwhile the women grouped themselves on one side with the men on the other, behind the dancers, clapping their hands and stamping their feet as accompaniment to the wild contortions of the two men, who whirled up and down and round and about at a breathless speed. As they clapped their hands the women chanted in unison, the same words apparently being repeated over and over again.

"What are they saying?" I asked my interpreter.

After listening for a few moments, Jean replied, "The words are something like this: 'We are so pleased, we are so pleased because at last a white woman has come to visit us. We are so pleased.'" And so on. "It is true they *are* very pleased," added Jean. "They say no one ever comes up here, and you are the first white woman to pay them a visit, and they think it is an honour to have you."

After some minutes the dancers, breathless and perspiring, ceased their contortions and stood still in front of me. I gave each of them a franc, with which they seemed highly pleased. Then, picking up their tom-toms and beating on them, they led

the people in procession to the end of the village. I followed with Jean.

On reaching an open space beyond the last of the huts, the people formed a large circle with the dancers in the centre. The men now performed what I gathered, by its wild nature, was a war dance, brandishing axes with short wooden handles and shouting excitedly. The rest of the men all joined in singing as they danced, while the women continued marking time by clapping their hands and swaying from side to side. I watched them for some while by the light of my torch and then, as I was getting very sleepy, decided to go to bed. Jean saw me safely to my hut, but we were soon followed by the people, who once more grouped themselves outside. Jean told them I was tired and was going indoors. Having learned the Malagasy words "*Veloma*" (Good-bye) and *Misaotra* (Thank you), I smilingly repeated these several times, much to the delight of the crowd. "*Veloma, Veloma!*", they shouted in return, and continued crying it for some little time after I had shut myself away inside the hut. While helping me to set up the screen doors, Jean had told me not to be alarmed if I were to hear knocking on the side of the walls during the night, as this sometimes happened to strangers, but if the people were to annoy and disturb me to any extent I must call his name and he would come and send them away. Leaving his rifle behind, which he had rested against one of the walls, he said goodnight and left me. Hoping the rifle was not loaded, I took good care not to touch it. In any case, it would have been quite useless to me, being of an enormous size, taller than myself!

After undressing by the dim light of my one candle—I dared not light more for fear of running short—I set my breakfast ready for the next morning—tea and biscuits, and after preparing the spirit stove in readiness for boiling water I turned into bed about nine o'clock or earlier. Before blowing out the candle, I had a careful look to see if the mosquito-net was securely fastened all round. Having satisfied myself on this all-important point, I was just falling asleep when the tom-toms and singing, that had stopped after I had said good-night to the people, were resumed. Nearer came the sound and nearer until at last, judging by the noise, I gathered the crowd were dancing round and round my hut. Now and then the walls shook, and I gathered someone was perhaps knocking on the side, but what with the noise of the tom-toms and rattles and the weird cries of the people it was hard to know exactly what was happening.

I decided to take no notice and remain tucked up in bed inside my cosy sleeping-bag. In spite of the din, I must have dozed off to sleep, because it was ten o'clock when I looked at my watch by the light of my torch, which latter I always kept in the bed with me in case of emergency. The people were still singing and dancing outside, but not quite so loudly, and at last a sudden heavy downpour of rain had, to my relief, the effect of damping their enthusiasm, for very soon after this they quietened down, retiring, I imagine, to the shelter of their homes, and leaving me in peace to sleep. I had a good night, although once, on awaking, I heard voices and thought I heard a tapping sound, but I took no notice and it soon stopped.

I slept until five o'clock, when I dressed by candlelight and washed with water from a near-by stream, brought me in my enamel jug by Rakoto. A cup of hot tea with plenty of sugar and three biscuits revived me greatly, and by six o'clock there was sufficient daylight for me to open up the hut.

While Rakoto was packing up and the baggage poles were being loaded I took a walk round the village in order to take, if possible, some photographs. I had only my Kodak with me, having left my cine-camera behind at Fianarantsoa, for climatic conditions in the forest were not favourable for Kodochrome colour film. It was still early, not yet seven o'clock, and the rising sun was obscured by the heavy mist that hung over the hills. At this hour everything was saturated in damp and the air cool, so I was glad of my coat. I found most of the women outside their huts, some of them having returned from the stream with the day's supply of water, which they carried in hollow poles of bamboo resting on their shoulders, the open end blocked with leaves.

Much to their delight, I was able to distribute a number of bead necklaces among them. One of the women, quite a young girl, hung her necklace round her baby's neck and, unlike most of the others, who were too shy, allowed me to take her photograph.

The dress of all the Tanala is similar; the women wear either a hand-made mat of finely plaited strew sewn together up the side, forming a sacklike garment fastened with a cord round the waist, and in cold weather pulled up sufficiently high to cover the breasts, or else a similar garment of hand-woven raffia cloth artistically striped with colour—generally red, blue, and black—obtained from vegetable dyes. The babies are carried on their backs after the general custom, being securely tied into their mothers' garments.

The Tanala are very skilled in basket-work and weaving, and the men, in addition to a loin cloth, wear a short tunic of plaited straw with a jaunty flair above the knees, and a small skull-cap of the same. A similar straw cap is worn by the women. In cold weather and at night the men wear the lamba, toga-fashion, for extra warmth.

As a rule the Tanala are smaller built and not so dark as some of the other tribes. Many of the young women I saw were quite good-looking, with round faces, rather high cheek-bones, somewhat squat noses, but lovely soft eyes, and full, well-formed lips. They wore their hair in numerous ringlets composed of tight little plaits set stiffly with grease, for which castor oil is used whenever possible. Once arranged, the process taking many hours, the coiffure is allowed to remain for weeks, after the manner of a permanent wave, before it is redressed. The oil or fat with which the hair is saturated is a safeguard against vermin, from which in consequence these women do not suffer to any great extent.

Superstition is rife among the Tanala and much of their religion is connected with charms, which, similar to those employed in Imerina and sold at the markets, consist not only of beads of all kinds but of compounds of vegetable substances or, sometimes, of bones, dead insects, etc., wrapped in a cloth and enclosed in a small wooden box. The Tanala have charms for everything, including those to aid the village, the family, and the individual. Those concerned with the latter are the most numerous, and are used to avert sickness, injuries from crocodiles or lightning, and to counteract the evil power of an enemy and render his charms useless. There is also a widespread belief in lucky and unlucky days, and almost every village has its magician or Ombiasy, skilled in the ancient art of divination, who is supposed to act as a medium with the spirit world, and to give advice when needed. Like all the other tribes, the Tanala believe in a benign creative spirit who lives in the sky—Zanahary. They also believe in a race of nature spirits, good and evil, who inhabit the forests; but, in common with all the Malagasy, most important of all is attached to ancestor-worship and to the reverence of the spirits of the dead, with whom they believe they remain closely in contact and who, if not propitiated, may do them harm.

On my return to the hut where I had spent the night I found the Chief's wife sitting on the floor inside watching Rakoto packing up my camp bed. Unlike the other women, she was



A WOMAN OF THE SOUTH (ANTANOSY TRIBE) (see p. 106)



A YOUNG TANALA MOTHER (*see* p. 63)

resplendent in a blue silk robe with a brightly fringed shawl, obtained, no doubt, from one of the native traders who occasionally visit these remote villages with goods from the outside world. She thanked me again, through Jean, for the present I had given her and said how pleased she had been to see me. Then, casting her eyes heavenwards, she started to intone what sounded like a sort of prayer. On asking Jean what she was saying, he replied: "I will try and tell you. The Queen is asking the Great Spirit Who lives in the sky to guard you on your way and to protect you from the many evil spirits of the forest."

I thanked her for this kind prayer and then, as my porters had arrived with my carrying chair, I was hoisted up on to their shoulders, from where I said good-bye to the people, who, with the Chief and his wife and many of the children, crowded round the filanzana crying, "*Veloma, veloma!*" as they sped me on my way.

My porters decided to take a shorter route back to Fort-Carnot. It was even more precipitous than the ascent, and several times it was all I could do not to be thrown out of the chair, but I managed to hang on and towards mid-day found myself once more safely down in the valley, and being ferried across the river on the same bamboo raft as before. I walked the remaining part of the way, and we reached Fort-Carnot at two o'clock.

I was welcomed back by Monsieur Mandimbilaza. He showed me, rather proudly, a telegram he had just received from the Governor-General from Tananarive, asking him to do all he could to help me in any way I should wish. I much appreciated this consideration on the part of His Excellency, and told Monsieur Mandimbilaza of my great desire to find one of the hidden burial-places of the Tanala tribes, in order that I could, if possible, take a photograph.

Monsieur Mandimbilaza explained that I should find this difficult, for the tombs were hidden away in the most inaccessible places. He thought, however, that Jean, whom he would send with me back to Manampatrana, knew of such a burial-place. We should, in order to reach it, have to take a different and very unfrequented track after reaching Imbatofotsz, passing the night at a primitive village, Anaviavy. Monsieur Madimbilaza then called Jean and gave him his orders, and the latter, after expressing his pleasure at the idea of escorting me further, promised that he would do his very best to find and show me the burial-place of which he knew.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE SEARCH FOR A TANALA BURIAL PLACE

AFTER heavy rain in the night, I found everything shrouded in a damp mist when I awoke and dressed at dawn the next morning. We had a long way to go on this occasion, for Jean had calculated it would take us about ten hours to reach Anaviavy, the village where I was to spend the night, owing to the rough and difficult track we should be following.

Accordingly, I insisted on leaving as early as possible, and by 6.45 we had already started on the day's march. Everything was soaking wet, with a light rain falling. Soon after seven o'clock, however, the mist showed signs of lifting and revealed the most lovely effects over the mountains. The valleys below were filled with clouds of filmy white mist, from out of which rose steep densely covered forest slopes, their summits gleaming in the sunshine that was beginning to break through. The dripping undergrowth through which our track cut its way sparkled with dewdrops, while the countless fine cobwebs outlined with glistening moisture formed a silver network in between the ferns and greenery bordering our path. The route followed was the same as far as the village of Imbatofotsz where I had spent the first night after leaving Manampatrana, but from here we branched off on to another track much less defined. About mid-day, after about five hours' travelling, we reached a tiny village on the summit of a small rounded hill, and here we stopped for the mid-day meal and the usual hour-and-a-half's rest always taken by the porters.

The sun was very hot, and once again I was thankful for the shelter of one of the native huts that was offered me. While my men were cooking and eating their rice in another part of the village I boiled myself a couple of eggs, which, with vita-weat bread-and-marmite, a couple of petit beurre biscuits and a banana, made a very satisfactory meal. I always carried water with me which I had previously boiled before starting, and which would last me out for the day both for drinking purposes and for washing my hands, if necessary. Rakoto would fill my big water-bottle from either river or stream, the water up here in the hills being, so far as one could tell, quite safe to drink if boiled. I had not forgotten the advice of the French doctor at Ambositra, and always finished my lunch with a 5-grain tablet of quinine,

with a second dose at night if I was feeling extra tired. To this practice I believe I owe the fact that I kept free from fever.

Before leaving this little hamlet I was presented by the headman with a bowl of rice, more eggs, and another chicken ! The latter I managed politely to refuse, as my baggage was by now hung around to an embarrassing extent with strings of bananas and other gifts, including already a couple of fowls suspended, and I simply could not do with another. Jean had attempted to cook one for me at Fort-Carnot, where he got hold of a big cooking-pot, but the result was so tough that I had difficulty in eating any of it and much preferred eggs and my tinned food.

The next part of the way led through wild and hilly country, the track following above and sometimes alongside a pretty winding river, bordered in places with giant leaves of banana trees and other palms. At one point we had to cross this stream. There was no raft or boat, so it had to be forded. Fortunately, the water was not deep and did not reach above the porters' waists. They bore me safely across in my chair, holding me above the water, my baggage following.

Next we came to a bit of very stiff climbing up and down steep and rocky slopes, during which time I had a narrow escape from a nasty fall. My porters were carrying me down a very steep descent with no marked track. My filanzana was at an acute angle, the front poles supported on the shoulders of two porters below me, while the back ones rested on those of the men behind and above. Consequently I found myself standing upright on the swinging foot-rest of the chair, clasping the arms on either side as tightly as possible, while I tried to keep the balance. Suddenly one of the cords suspending the foot-rest broke, and down I slipped and found myself hanging on by my hands to the arm-rests, while my legs dangled helplessly to and fro. The porters staggered and all but fell with me down the precipitous hillside, below which was a rushing torrent, but with incredible skill they recovered themselves just in time to lower me safely to the ground, so that beyond slightly spraining my right thumb I was unhurt. The broken foot-rest was repaired with a piece of strong string—too short, unfortunately, so that from now onwards it hung crookedly and proved most uncomfortable, as it no longer gave me a secure foothold, but that could not be helped and I had to make the best of it.

And so on once more, up one hill and down another, through lovely forest glades and over sparkling streams, until at last—

an hour or two later—we reached a remote and wooded valley, above which, on a ridge of hill, I saw a cluster of bamboo huts, and I was told by Jean that we were nearing our halting-place, the village of Anaviavy. All around were higher hills, densely forested and with no further sign of habitation. As my caravan slowly wended its way up a steep incline towards the collection of huts the entire population came out to greet me, headed by the Chief with the usual ceremonial gifts, including yet another fowl, which once more I felt bound to accept. The men called out a welcome of some sort, but the women, as usual, were very shy and timid at first, until I had made friends with them. My presents of bead necklaces, however, soon helped to thaw the ice.

In a square space in the centre of the village was a tall pole, forked at the top and having at the base a couple of large slabs of smooth stone with grass and herbs stuffed in the crevices. This, I learned, was the heathen place of sacrifice to be found in all primitive Tanala villages, and in others, too, throughout the country. On special occasions oxen are killed and roasted upon the stones, a grand feast and orgy following which sometimes lasts for several days, according to the number of animals sacrificed.

I was surprised to find in this particular village a thatched bamboo hut, larger than the rest and crowned by a roughly carved wooden cross. It was open, and on entering I found an altar at the eastern end, just a plain wooden table over which hung a picture of the Virgin and Child. I realized I was in a little Roman Catholic church. The building of it was not quite completed, for some natives were still working at the inside. I was told subsequently that quite a number of the Tanala are now becoming converted to Christianity, having received visits from native evangelists, some belonging to the Roman Catholic religion and others to the Non-conformists.

On returning from my walk I found my baggage had been unloaded and placed in the tiny one-roomed hut that Jean told me had been vacated by its owners and left empty for my use. I would have liked to have thanked the people to whom it belonged, but they were not to be seen. This dwelling was similar to the others in which I had slept, but smaller and less clean. A thick upright wooden post supporting the roof and set in the centre of the floor took up a good deal of space, and there was only just room for my camp bed along one side. I placed it opposite one of the two entrances. As usual, there was no window, so as long as daylight lasted I did not close

the doors ; the heavy screens which served for the latter rested against the adjacent walls. While I was boiling water for my tea I saw with a qualm several enormous spiders on the walls, and, what was worse, a number of huge cockroaches of a peculiar red colour ; they were running over the mats laid upon the floor.

I was much afraid that, when it got dark and I put out my candle, rats would appear in addition, and that would be the last straw. So far I had been lucky, for it happened to be the season when the rice was being collected by the villagers and stored in their granaries. The rats, therefore, instead of swarming, as they usually do, through the people's huts at night in search of scraps of food, all collected instead where the rice was stored, some of which, invariably falling on the ground outside the village granary, provided a pleasant feast for them. This was my one hope, while I had a last and careful search round for insects, etc., before getting into bed beneath my net.

Earlier I had managed to take a photograph of the people as they grouped themselves round the sacrificial stones, and I gave two of the children some beads. As usual, this had a happy effect, and the women had crowded round me and followed me to the door of my hut, where they sang a chant of welcome, clapping their hands in rhythm meanwhile. I joined them in the clapping of hands, much to their amusement.

After my supper of sardines, vita-weat, raisins and tea, during which time I was forced to light my candle and close the screen doors to keep the hens out, it soon became dark, and having written up my diary, I turned into bed about 8.30, very tired and ready for sleep. But that was not to be had for a long while, for shortly after I had settled down the people started beating tom-toms and singing as they had done at Antarambongo.<sup>1</sup> The noise went on and on, louder and ever louder, stopping at intervals and then continuing with renewed vigour. Sleepily, I wondered what I ought to do. Were the people performing a special dance in my honour as last time, and, if so, ought I to watch it? At last I decided I better make an appearance, at any rate for a moment or two outside the door of my hut, as otherwise the singers might get annoyed. Lighting my candle, I redressed, pulled back the screen of matting a short way, and peeped outside into the darkness. By the light of my torch I saw that, instead of dancing in front of my hut, the people were all around the place of sacrifice, a few hundred yards away. They were chanting, clapping their hands to the rhythm of the tom-toms, and swaying backwards and forwards as they sang.

When they saw me they remained where they were, but increased the fervour of their singing and beat more loudly upon the tom-toms. I remained watching them for a few moments, but not for long, for they struck me as becoming almost fanatically excited. I could not tell what they might do next, and Jean was nowhere to be seen. Returning inside the hut, I placed the screen carefully over the doorway and prepared once more for bed, diving hastily into my sleeping-bag as a huge rat darted across the floor. I heard others scuttling around the rafters and feared to light my torch in case I should see more.

At last, in spite of my uneasiness, I dozed off to sleep, only to be roughly awakened at midnight by a heavy thud against the side of my bed. Much startled, I hardly dared think what it might be. It was pitch dark and I could not see what was happening. Was it some big animal, or what? Groping for my torch under the bed-clothes, I sat up and hit my head against what I thought at first was the side of the hut, which seemed to have fallen across the bed, carrying rods of the mosquito-net with it. I hastily lit the torch and flashed it round the room. A rush of cold air showed me that the doorway facing was wide open, and I realized that the big matting screen standing up in front had either been pushed aside or else had fallen backwards into the room over the bed, having possibly been blown down by a sudden gust of wind. Had I lain at the foot instead of the head of the bed I should have had a worse fright, for the heavy screen might have struck against my head. It was pouring with rain and the sudden storm was accompanied by a loud clap of thunder. The rain was driving into the hut, and as quickly as possible, but with some difficulty, I heaved the screen back into position over the opening and secured it with a peg and leather thong.

Rain continued to drip into the hut through cracks in the roof, and I found my clothes, which I had hung along a piece of cord stretched above my head from end to end of the room, were getting very damp. I took them down, folded them under my camp mattress, and tumbled into bed once more, this time to sleep fairly well, with no further interruptions until dawn.

It was still cool at the early hour of five o'clock, and everything as usual was saturated with moisture. Rakoto brought me some cold water from the nearest stream and, after I had washed, dressed and had my usual breakfast, one of the villagers brought me further water carried in one of the long poles of hollow bamboo used for the purpose and poured it over my hands, thinking I might like to have a further wash. The

Tanala are a cleanly people, and I noticed my porters frequently washed their feet in passing streams.

By seven o'clock my baggage porters had fixed up their loads, and after taking some photographs I said good-bye to the people and started off in search of the reputed Tanala burial-place, which Jean said he thought we should find not very far away. The track, very narrow in places, led through dense virgin forest; at times the sky was hidden, and we appeared to be passing through a tunnel of green, where bamboo and a tangle of undergrowth met and interlaced overhead. Presently we came to a steep incline on the left of the path, a drop of a hundred feet or so, with a marshy swamp below, backed by great overhanging cliffs, forming a kind of cave. Jean stopped the porters and whispered to me that the burial-place was under the shelter of the cliffs. Looking below, I could just see what he described, but it would be necessary to climb down and cross the swamp in order to reach the cave and see inside. I took out my camera, meaning to take first a long-distance view of the entrance, when, to my bitter disappointment, I found that I had run out of films, having unknowingly finished my last roll after leaving Anaviavy. All my other rolls were at Fianarantsoa, where I was returning for a few days before moving on to the east coast. My only consolation was that at this early hour the light was poor, as the sun was not yet shining directly into the cave, and I calculated that if it were possible to break my journey down to the coast and make a return visit to Anaviavy, should I be fortunate enough to be given further porters for the purpose, I would arrive at the cave possibly in the early afternoon, when the light would be far better, and I should have more chance of obtaining a good photograph. Consoling myself with this thought, I explained the situation to Jean and we continued on our way.

Another half-hour or so down very steep slopes through the forest and we emerged into a series of narrow basin-like valleys, surrounded on all sides with high wooded hills, over which we climbed. During the afternoon we passed through two further hilltop Tanala villages, the friendly people running out to see me and presenting me with more gifts, and then we dropped down to a river-bed following alongside the stream for some distance, until we came in sight of yet another village, the last one we should pass before fording the river and taking the route back to Fort-Carnot. I could see the cluster of huts for some distance before we reached them, for the village stood, like the

others, on the summit of a hill. Figures seemed to be gathering in large numbers, and I could hear the distant rhythmic beating of tom-toms. Apparently the people had heard in advance of my coming, and the entire village was gathered to welcome me, and a wonderful welcome they gave.

I was met by a procession headed by two men beating loudly on tom-toms; they were followed by two others swinging rattles, while the rest of the men and women came behind clapping their hands and chanting gaily in rhythm. On reaching me the people thronged excitedly around my filanzana. Jean waved them back so that my porters could lower me to the ground. Stepping out of the chair, I smiled at the crowd and said "*Misaotra! Misaotra!*" ("Thank you".) This much pleased the people, who, giving a kind of war-whoop in response, started to sing and clap their hands with renewed vigour. I joined them in the clapping of hands, delighting them still more.

At the end of the song of welcome their Chief came forward with two others, and bowing low to the ground presented me with a bowl of rice, six eggs, and yet another live fowl! I had to accept everything, of course, and handed them to Rakoto, who carried the fowl and tied the other gifts on to my baggage. On getting back into the filanzana, I waved my hand and called out, "*Veloma!*" and with Jean shouldering his rifle and marching in front of me and the people following behind in a long procession, clapping their hands and singing, beating tom-toms and shaking rattles, I made a triumphant exit from their village.

As we passed some outlying huts others ran out to join the throng, the procession following me as far as the river, which had to be crossed by means of a bamboo raft. While I was waiting for the latter to be ferried across, the people crowded about the river-bank, giving me a final send-off by further singing, stamping of feet, and clapping of hands, while one of their number performed a native dance, whirling to and fro in front of me. When out of breath he stopped; I gave him a franc, which he received with a whoop of joy, and then with Jean's help I stepped on to the shaky raft and crossed to the other side of the river, while the people behind continued to shout, sing, and clap their hands.

I felt greatly touched by the friendliness of these simple folk. The experience was an unforgettable one. Jean told me that the welcome I had received was the biggest of which

the people were capable. "They could not have done more," he added, "had you been the Governor-General himself! They were proud to have a visit from you, and it gave them great joy!"

After an hour or so we struck the original track by which I had come on the outward journey, and before long we arrived back at my starting-point, Manampatrana, on the mountain railway. Here I had arranged to pick up the bi-weekly train returning up to Fianarantsoa. It left Manampatrana at nine o'clock the next morning.

After saying good-bye to Jean and the twelve porters, I set up my camp bed for the night in the *Chambre de Passage*, one of three adjoining bamboo one-roomed huts set apart for travellers. The room was bare of furniture, but a table and chair were produced for me on my arrival by the native woman in charge. The floor-mats left a good deal to be desired in the way of cleanliness, but otherwise I was able to make myself quite comfortable. My room was separated from that adjoining by a wooden partition open at the top; consequently I heard every sound from the large native family which occupied it. There were several children, one of whom had whooping-cough. So tired was I, however, that after tumbling into bed at nine o'clock I dropped asleep immediately and knew nothing more till 6.30 the next morning, when I awoke much refreshed.

It was good for once not to be obliged to hurry off at sunrise, and having plenty of time I boiled an egg for my breakfast and packed up at my leisure before joining Rakoto on the little platform. The train was punctual, and as it was a beautiful morning I was able to enjoy to the full the wonderful scenery along the line as we slowly wound upwards into the mountains towards the high plateau.

And so back to Fianarantsoa and civilization once more, the first stage of my adventures safely over and feeling decidedly fitter than when I had started off, the remains of my sore throat and lassitude having completely left me.

## CHAPTER VIII

TO THE EAST COAST, AMONG THE ANTAIMORO TRIBES

MUCH as I had enjoyed my first experience of forest travel, I confess that I appreciated to the full the comparative comfort

of the little Hotel Terminus at Fianarantsoa on my return, when I was welcomed back by the hospitable French proprietor and his wife, and found waiting for me a big packet of letters—my welcome mail from home.

The next morning I called on Monsieur Poupon, the local Government Administrator. He was much interested in the account of my journey, and on hearing the sad story of how my films had run out just before coming to the Tanala burial-place he most kindly agreed to find me further porters—should those I had had be no longer available—in order that I might make the return visit to Anaviavy from Manampatrana, when on my way down to the east coast in three days' time. He also undertook to find me a reliable boy in place of Rakoto, who would be able to speak French, act as interpreter, and remain with me on the further journeys I had planned before returning again to Fianarantsoa.

The next days were busy ones : replenishing stores—sardines, sugar, matches, candles, biscuits, etc.—writing up my diary and letters home, and taking photographs and cinematograph film of the picturesque market with its crowds of natives representing various tribes other than the Betsileo of the district, and mostly wearing brightly coloured shawls and lambas in place of the white worn universally by the Hova in other parts of Imerina. The men adopted wide straw hats with shady brims, while the women carried sunshades.

The first thing I did on my return, however, was to go round that evening to see Monsieur and Madame Basset, and to hear on their wireless set the latest news of the European Crisis. It was now nearly June, and I could not help feeling anxious at the thought of war coming and possibly cutting me off from England before I could reach home. The Bassets were inclined to laugh at my fears, for they were among the sanguine French in Madagascar who were convinced that war, if it came, would not break out at any rate until the following year. I hoped they were right.

A couple of days later, just before waking in the morning, I had a strange dream. Before me was a huge flaming beacon casting a red glow upon the anxious faces of a great crowd of people. As I drew nearer I heard them saying in hushed and awestruck tones, "War has come. Yes, the war has come. *Nothing* can stop it now. It has come." As I awoke, the following sentence was impressed upon my mind: "Take the *Grandidier*."

Now, I had booked my passage home in the *Metzinger*, but on looking up the list of sailings I found that the *Grandidier* was the preceding boat and due to start a fortnight earlier. So deeply struck was I by this dream that I straight away asked the hotel proprietor to telephone for me to the shipping office at Tananarive. He got me through and I said I wished to cancel my passage in the *Metzinger*, and had they a berth for me in the *Grandidier*? "Yes, there is one first-class single-berth cabin still free—the only one left," was the reply. I booked it there and then, with the fortunate result that I got back to England just in time before the declaration of war. Had I taken the later boat I might have had the greatest difficulty in getting across the Channel, and would in all probability have had to leave my baggage containing all my cine-films, photographs, and diaries behind, never perhaps to be recovered.

Before leaving Fianarantsoa I met some of the British and American missionaries, who are doing fine work among the Betsileo of the district. I was much impressed with the work of Dr. Helland of the Norwegian-American Lutheran Mission at Ivory, on the outskirts of Fianarantsoa. Apart from his church and school, Dr. Helland and his wife superintended a leper colony, and have earned undying gratitude from the unfortunate victims of this terrible disease.

I also visited Mr. and Mrs. Groult, of the London Missionary Society, a wonderful old couple who have worked for years, chiefly among the Tanala tribes with native evangelists. In spite of their age, they still from time to time make long forest journeys, so they told me, by filanzana, in order to visit their various little native churches in remote forest villages. Their bungalow, set in a pretty garden, was built high up on the hill-side, near the Roman Catholic cathedral, which dominates the town and overlooks a magnificent view of rolling hills and wooded valleys far below. The air up here, at 6,000 feet, was cool and exhilarating, especially towards evening and early morning, and the sunsets rivalled in beauty those of Tananarive.

Mr. Groult asked me if, later on, when I expected to be in the far south of the island, near Fort-Dauphin, I would look up his son, Mr. C. Groult, who had a shack near Amboasary, close to a great stretch of forest with the strange vegetation of the south, totally different from anywhere else in Madagascar. He thought his son might be able to take me to see the white lemurs, of which there were many in that district, and he gave me a letter of introduction to him, for which I was very grateful,

as I had no doubt it would be most helpful should I succeed in reaching the south.

The train down to Manakara on the east coast, to which place I was ultimately bound, after my second forest journey, left on a Sunday. Monsieur Poupon told me he had arranged for twelve porters and a finanzana to await me at Manampatrana. I would once again have to stay the night, as the train did not arrive till late in the afternoon. He had found a personal servant for me, a boy who was called Paoly, a Betsileo and, I gathered, a Roman Catholic. Paoly appeared intelligent, and spoke quite good French, for which I was grateful, as I no longer should have the services of the useful Jean, my former armed bodyguard.

When we left Fianarantsoa the weather showed every prospect of keeping fine; visibility was good, showing to full advantage the magnificent scenery along the single line, where the quick drop of over 4,000 feet from the high plateau down to the tropical forests below towards the coast was most dramatic.

After a moderately comfortable night in the little guest-house I awoke to a beautiful morning, and after taking a photograph of my new set of porters which included, to my relief, Radama—he who had been head porter in the last journey, and who understood a word or two of French—I was hoisted up in my filanzana on to the men's shoulders, and we started off soon after eight o'clock in glorious sunshine. The forest was looking especially lovely, with every conceivable shade of green from the delicate pale colour of the feathery bamboo to the dark and glossy leaves of the undergrowth, with its tangle of creepers and ferns. We stopped for the mid-day rest at the same village where, the week before on my way back, I had been given the big reception by the native population. Once more I was met with singing, rattles, and hand-clapping, and while eating my lunch, seated on the steps of a hut lent me for the purpose, the people stood opposite forming a semi-circle in front of me, while one of their number, a small athletic man in a short straw tunic, performed a wild dance, whirling around to the accompaniment of tom-toms and beating of feet and hands. At its conclusion I gave the dancer some centimes, and after we had exchanged the only greeting I knew, "*Veloma! Veloma!*", he moved off, accompanied by the crowd, a few of the women staying behind to watch me finish my lunch.

I discovered that quite a number of the people in this village were Christians, having been converted by a native evangelist

through the London Missionary Society. They were holding their Sunday morning service, and after my lunch I joined them for a short while. They were gathered together in a large bamboo hut, thatched like the rest, but set apart as a church with rows of wooden benches. I went inside and found about forty or so of the villagers, men on the right, women on the left, singing a hymn to the tune of "Onward, Christian Soldiers!", and facing a plain table at the end of the room, which evidently served as the altar. I was struck by the reverent earnestness with which the little congregation listened to a Bible reading in Malagasy, and repeated what I imagined was the Lord's Prayer; the same kind of simple sincerity that had accompanied somewhat similar services I had attended in Lapland, with the women on one side of the church and the men on the other, as here. People equally primitive in their ways, one race belonging to the far-away Arctic, the other to the tropics, but both united in their reverent worship.

After leaving this village and following a steep track up into the hills we entered the dense patch of forest in which I had previously come across the Tanala tomb. Soon, on the right of the path, we came to the deep wooded dell, where beneath the shelter of the great overhanging rock was the hidden burial-place. My porters had stopped their usual incessant chattering, and for once were strangely silent. I asked them to put me down, and, getting out of my chair, I told Radama that I wished to get as near as possible to the tomb. As it was impossible for me to be carried in the filanzana, the way being too steep, with a fetid swamp below, Radama carried me on his back down the bank, through the bog and tangled undergrowth, to the mouth of the cave, where I was able to stand upon a patch of dry stony ground. The air was dank and unhealthy, with swarms of mosquitoes, a breeding-place for malarial fever, and I decided to stay only long enough to take the photograph, which proved to be the first taken of such a burial-place. According to the custom of the tribe, the bodies were not buried under the ground, but laid either beneath a light covering of boards or in rough open coffins of hollowed-out tree-trunks. I noticed one body thus exposed, wrapped in a pink lamba; small stones, placed as memorials, rested on the top of the covering of boards. The tombs of the Tanala Ikongo are called Kibory, and are said to be somewhat similar to those adopted by other tribes on the south-east coast, bordering the Tanala territory.

The sun was shining on the cave, fortunately providing the

best conditions for a photograph, and those I managed to take proved completely successful, amply rewarding me for the effort of the second journey to the place. Although my porters were watching me with some curiosity, they made no objection to my use of the camera, as I half feared they might do. I was a bit uneasy, until I remembered that Jean had reassured me on the point when I had asked him. "They won't mind you taking a photograph," he had said, "because they probably won't understand what you are doing. It is unlikely they have ever seen a camera before." This, evidently, was the case, for I had no difficulty with these men. I noticed they seemed nervous and in a hurry to leave the place, however, and when I was ready carried me away as quickly as possible up through the forest back towards Anaviavy.

It was getting late in the afternoon and the sun was setting when we finally reached the village. I was lent the same hut as before, but on this occasion found the floor swarming with ants. The head man ordered clean mats to be put down for me. This was done, and in addition the owner kindly removed some of his garments which were hanging along the string slung across one side of the room. I hung my coat in their place.

Being tired, I soon fell asleep on returning to bed that evening, only to awake, startled by a snuffling noise under the floor. It was an animal of some sort, and until I had lit my torch and looked round I feared it was inside the room. It proved, however, to be merely the owner's dog outside, who, curious at scenting a stranger, was snuffling about underneath the raised floor. I dropped asleep again, but awoke once more to hear a lot of scuffling around my bed. Rats! I dared not look, but snuggled down instead as far as possible in my sleeping-bag, trying my best to ignore the sound, and it was not long before I again fell asleep, this time until dawn.

There was a very heavy mist with the usual light rain in the early morning, and everything, including my clothing, was very damp. Paoly called me with some water at five o'clock, and I had just finished cooking and eating my breakfast when a native of the village appeared with a bamboo pole; out of which he poured water upon my hands, as on the previous occasion. A novel way of washing!

The sky was overcast as we set out on the return journey to Manampatrana, with only occasional gleams of sunshine from between dark heavy banks of gathering clouds. In the afternoon, as we neared Manampatrana, the porters became very lively,

singing and joking among themselves, my carriers changing places every few minutes with great vigour, tossing the poles supporting my chair across to each other's shoulders, causing me to jump into the air and down again, while I clung on to the arms or I should have fallen out. On reaching the level of the valley the men became still more hilarious; they whistled and sang and hallooed to natives we passed en route, and were in the height of good spirits. Arriving at the guest-house, I paid them off the recognized sum I had been told; not a very large one, but they all appeared well satisfied and left me with smiles and cries of "*Veloma! Veloma!*"

I had only been back in the shelter of the Manampatrana guest-house a few minutes when it came on to pour with torrential rain. Having had no umbrella, I was lucky not to have been caught in it, for the storm lasted for many hours, the rain continuing until the following morning.

At seven o'clock, after a good night except for the occasional sound of rats in the rafters and around the floor, I boiled my eggs and made tea for my breakfast, and, after helping Paoly to pack up, was ready to catch the nine o'clock train which was to take me down to the coast at Manakara.

Beyond a few natives, there was no one else on the little platform. The train from Fianarantsoa was punctual, and soon after nine o'clock we were off. The single line continued to dip sharply downhill towards the coast. The forest became very dense with towering hills covered with tropical vegetation and occasional groves of the "Traveller's Tree", with its great palm leaves spread out fanwise at the top of the tall trunk. The early morning had seen more rain and an overcast sky, but as we dropped down from the mountains to sea level the weather cleared, although it was very steamy and hot. The District Administrator had sent an official to meet me at the station on arrival at Manakara, and he drove me in the Government car to the little hotel, where I was given a clean and pleasant room opening out on to a wooden varandah, running the length of all the bedrooms. He then took me to the bungalow of the Chef de Region, who, on hearing that I wished to spend several days at Vohipeno, further south, in order to see the Antaimoro tribes, and to make another forest journey, promised to write to Monsieur Ferrie, the District Administrator, asking him to procure the necessary porters for the tour. He said I should find a Government Rest Hut at Vohipeno in which I could set up my camp bed, but I must take my own provisions.

After a walk by the sea, I looked over my food stores, bought some extra tins of sardines, and helped Paoly to repack the baskets in readiness for my early start on the morrow. The native hotel proprietor had undertaken to procure a car for me, with a Malagasy driver to take me to Vohipeno, and I was told he would be round at seven o'clock in the morning. As two hours later there was still no sign of either car or driver I felt a bit worried. A Frenchman in the hotel, who worked on the mountain railway, kindly took me to the garage from which the car had been ordered. I was told by another car-driver that it had already left for Vohipeno and was full up. My informant, who was French and went by the name of Payet, and who said he was a native of Reunion Island, offered to drive me to Vohipeno himself, as he possessed two cars. The one he produced looked very old and battered, but had the advantage of being open, with a hood and side-pieces, and I had no doubt it would be much cooler than the stuffy closed Malagasy saloon cars. I therefore arranged with Payet to take me to Vohipeno and return for me there in a few days' time.

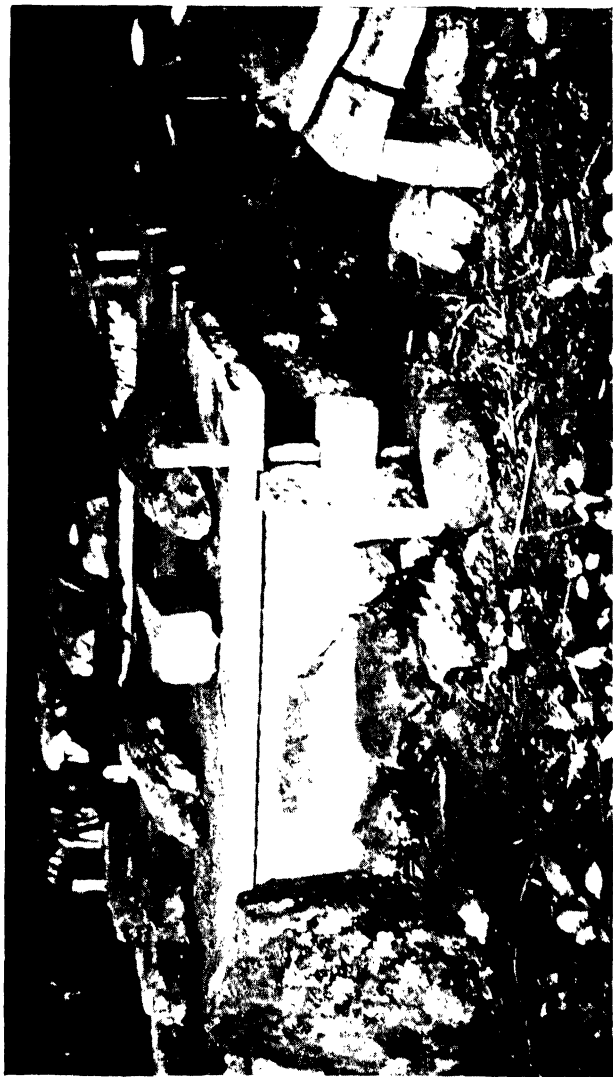
Returning to the hotel for my baggage, I found the first car had at last arrived, but as the driver was so late I chose to go with Payet as arranged, and thankful I was for this decision, because I found that the driver of the first car had been collecting a number of further passengers, and presently he passed us at breakneck speed, his car loaded with Malagasy men and women, and I realized I should have been packed in with these people—the last thing I wanted!

It was after 9.30 before we ourselves got started; the baggage and Paoly, with a small boy—apparently the driver's assistant—in the back seat and myself in front. After being ferried across a river on a big raft we passed for some distance along flat country parallel with the coast. There were many Traveller's Trees, and the road frequently cut through high banks of rich red earth, covered with luxuriant tropical ferns and undergrowth. After about an hour and a half the old car came to a standstill, and after examining the engine, Payet, with many apologies, explained that, in the hurry of our departure, he had forgotten to take sufficient petrol! Fortunately we were only five miles from Vohipeno, and Payet told his boy to walk there, instructing him to return with the petrol as soon as possible on a bicycle.

We waited two long hours in the full heat of the day. I passed the time by eating my lunch and giving Payet a lesson



AT A TANALA HILL VILLAGE (see p. 59)



HIDDEN TANALA BURIAL PLACE (see p. 77)

in English. He had a French-English text book, but did not know how to pronounce the words. He told me that he had eleven children, eight of whom were living; but his cousin had had twenty-four children in twenty-four years, and had achieved the remarkable feat of producing five infants in one year. When I queried how she had managed it, he explained that in that particular year triplets were born in the January—all boys—and then in December of the same year she had produced twin girls. All had lived, and she herself was still going strong. She had married at the age of seventeen.

"In Reunion Island we have splendid large families," remarked my companion.

He then went on to comment on the falling birth-rate of France, where the rich failed in their duty of increasing the race, leaving this to the poor, who continued to have large families they were unable to support. "France will decline if this goes on," he said mournfully.

I agreed, remarking that we had much the same difficulty in England. Although, at the same time, I thought there were limits, and that a family of twenty-four was far too much for one woman, however robust, but no doubt his cousin was an exception. To which he agreed!

About one o'clock, much to my relief, Payet's boy arrived back on a bicycle with a basket containing several bottles full of petrol. The car was replenished, and soon we were off once more, reaching Vohipeno without further trouble. Here I found a pleasant little village on the banks of a wide river, and shaded by eucalyptus and mango trees and palms of many varieties. As the car drew up, an elderly, weather-beaten European in a white jacket and sun helmet came hurrying towards me out of a little store. He shook hands and, in halting English, explained that he was a Mauritian—a British subject born in Mauritius—and would be very pleased to act as interpreter for me with Monsieur Ferrie, the Administrator, who was expecting me to call. Thanking him, I explained that I would not need his services, being quite at home in the French language, as far as conversation went. I thought the man appeared disappointed. He shook hands again and expressed his great pleasure at meeting an Englishwoman, the first with whom he had talked for many years. Leaving him, Payet drove me to the little Government Guest House, where I left my baggage and put up my camp bed. The bungalow—for such it was—stood by itself in an enclosed compound shaded with trees. It

consisted of three large rooms, each empty except for a chair or two, a wooden table against the wall, and a washing-stand. The rooms were connected with one another and a second door in each led out on to a raised verandah that ran the length of the guest-house. I gathered that I should be quite alone here for the night. Paoly was to sleep in the village, a short distance off.

After he had brought me some water, and I had had a wash and changed my dusty clothes for a cool frock, I went to call on Monsieur Ferrie. I found he had not yet returned from his office, but his wife, after kindly inviting me to stay to tea, and to return again later for dinner, when I would meet her husband, showed me over her charming house and their pretty garden, shaded by palm trees and built up on a hillside above the river.

After tea, Payet, who had waited for me with the car, drove me out to see the Royal Village of Ivato, where once lived the ancient kings of the Antaimoro tribe, among which people I now found myself. I had heard that in Ivato were to be seen the remains of the royal tombs. I found them enclosed within bamboo huts. Resting against the outside walls of these huts were several primitive wooden blocks with roughly carved human heads. I was told that sacrifices were still offered before these effigies in honour of the departed kings. While I was taking some photographs, a handsome woman with almost pure Arab features came forward and was introduced to me as the Queen. Her husband, of direct royal descent, is still known by the Antaimoro as the king of their tribe. The history of these people is most interesting. Local tradition says that at some early date, perhaps in the fourteenth century, a small party of Arabs, driven by enemies from Arabia, escaped in boats, two of which finally drifted to the south-east coast of Madagascar. Landing near Vohipeno, these men intermarried with the women they found there, and the present tribe, who claim descent from these Arabs, is the result. The people keep themselves strictly apart from other tribes, seldom if ever intermarrying, and they are the only people in the world of this particular blend of Arab and Malagasy. French Roman Catholic and Norwegian-American Lutheran Missionaries are working among them, and both have opened churches in the neighbourhood, with the result that a number of the Antaimoro are now Christians. The main religion of this tribe, however, still remains the same—a distorted form of Mohammedanism in which astrology plays a very big part. In appearance the Antaimoro have much of the Arab

in their features with a blending of negroid, more marked in some than in others, while their skin is seldom very dark. So proud are they of their clan that they insist on being carried home for burial, however far the distance may be. As they are enterprising traders and often travel all over the island, it may happen that their corpses have sometimes to be carried for hundreds of miles back to their native villages!

The houses of the Antaimoro differ slightly from those of the Tanala. They are not made from the ordinary bamboo, but from the Traveller's Tree, the wood from the trunks forming the sides of the hut, and the long flat leaves, when dried, thatching the roof. The plaited straw garments and little round raffia caps worn by most of the people are similar to those of the Tanala. Each village has granaries for rice, like those I had seen in Tanala villages, raised high from the ground upon poles, on account of the rat menace.

I found the people very friendly, and the women less shy than the Tanala. In common with the Queen, they were quite willing—even eager as a rule—to be photographed; unlike their more primitive sisters, who usually ran away and hid themselves.

The ancient Royal Family were called Anakara, and were famous for their learning. They were the first to reduce the Malagasy language of Malayo-Polynesian origin to writing; this they did in Arabic characters. Latin characters were not used until 1820, and at one time the Arabic form of writing called "Sora-be" (large or important writing), possibly meaning "holy", owing to its containing extracts from the Koran in special books, was used even outside the area of the Antaimoro, the powerful Hova rulers employing men of this tribe as their letter-writers, and making them responsible for fixing the calendar and keeping the times and dates. The names of the Malagasy days of the week evidently originated from the Antaimoro, for they are Arabic in origin, and are used to this day all over Madagascar.

It is interesting to note that the curious form of writing of the Sora-be is simplified from pure Arabic, and is peculiar to this one tribe, no other people using the same script. A certain proportion of the Antaimoro continue to the present day to write in their ancient script, using local paper made from the bark of trees. I was fortunate in being given some of this paper, a young man making a book of it for me, in which he copied out extracts from a Sora-be holy book of great age belonging to his grandfather, and held by his family in much reverence. These

ancient books, of which only a few remain, are considered very precious, and contain four different types of matter : quotations of a somewhat mixed nature from the Koran and Islamic teachers, sagas in prose recounting battles and noble deeds, a section on astrology and divination, and a section on wills and testaments.

Returning to Vohipeno, I sent Payet back to Manakara, from where he undertook to fetch me with his car in three days' time.

I spent the evening with Monsieur and Madame Ferrie. Unfortunately, I was not wearing my mosquito boots, and got badly stung, in consequence, the mosquitoes being unpleasantly active and numerous in this district, and the air, in spite of its being the tropical winter, hot, enervating, and humid—a great contrast to the comparatively bracing climate of Tananarive and Fianarantsoa up on the high plateau.

I was escorted back to the guest-house by a servant, finding the way by the light of my torch, and slept well till dawn. The next morning Madame Ferrie and her husband kindly drove me to see an interesting Antaimoro village with many rice granaries, as they thought I would find there some good subjects to photograph. On the way we had to cross the wide river of the Matitanana. It was unbridged, but we were ferried across, the car being driven on to a big bamboo raft manned by stalwart natives.

There are many crocodiles in this river, and Madame Ferrie told me that some while ago a woman of Vohipeno was washing clothes at the edge of the water, when a large crocodile seized her by the leg, breaking it badly. Hearing her screams, her husband rushed to the rescue just in time to save her life. The woman refused to have the leg amputated, preferring to run the risk of death through gangrene, but has apparently survived, for at the time of my visit she was expected to recover, although still in hospital.

Crocodiles in this part of the country are much irritated by insects from the overhanging forest trees along the river-bank, which drop on them and settle between their teeth. These insects are frequently caught by a small black-and-white bird of the seagull variety, which pick the insects from off the gums of the crocodiles. The Malagasy name for this bird has the quaint meaning of "Wife of the Crocodile", so called because of the useful service it performs.

We stayed for some while in the village we visited, and the

people, excited by the presence of the Chef de Region, crowded round us and seemed very pleased. In the afternoon Madame Ferrie took me to call on the Mother Superior of the French Mission of the Sisters of Charity of St. Paul. These Sisters have a large school at Vohipeno. In addition to the Malagasy they take some Chinese children, a certain number of Chinese traders having settled in Vohipeno among the Antaimoro for business purposes. The school and houses belonging to the Sisterhood were built of wood and thatched with palm leaves in the same manner as the native huts of the neighbourhood. They stood, together with their little wooden thatched chapel, amidst a grove of beautiful mango trees on a hillside overlooking the river and a wide stretch of forest beyond.

After staying with them to watch a beautiful sunset I returned with my kind hosts to their bungalow for dinner. Monsieur Ferrie told me he had arranged for porters and a filanzana to accompany me on the expedition I had told him I wished to make through part of the forest of Amboapaka near the coast, in order to reach a little village of forest people belonging to the Antaimoro, but similar to the Tanala in the hill country beyond. Monsieur Ferrie warned me that, never having travelled through this forest, he had no idea what the tracks would be like. He added he was sending a French-speaking native soldier with me to act as interpreter with the villagers. He thought these people would be very primitive and unaccustomed to Europeans, and I would find it hard to photograph them.

I was hoping, however, to take cine-film on this occasion, which was easily done without the people being aware of it. As usual, all depended on the weather. So far, I had been lucky, and a clear starlit night gave promise of a fine day on the morrow, when I was to make an early start in order to return before darkness fell.

## CHAPTER IX

### A FOREST EXPEDITION AND BACK TO FIANARANTSOA

In order to reach the forest of Amboapaka it was necessary to motor for some miles northwards along the coast road before striking inland. Monsieur Ferrie had arranged for a native wagon to take me, together with six porters, the soldier Piera

(Pierre), and a filanzana, to the nearest point from where I could strike the forest. I left Paoly behind to look after my belongings in the rest-hut.

By 7.30 I was off, taking the front seat by the driver, with the porters, Piera, and the filanzana packed in behind. It was a still and sultry day with occasional gleams of sunshine from an overcast sky. Rain seemed likely, and I was glad of the loan from Monsieur Ferrie of a big native umbrella similar to my own, which had been lost.

We followed a road along the coast for a while, until it ceased, changing into a wide grass track through a belt of forest. This track, except for the tropical trees, cacti, and shrubs on either side, reminded me somewhat of the green glades in the English New Forest. At last we reached the outskirts of these woods, and, still following the coast, emerged into open downland, the road, merely a sandy track skirting the sea-shore to our right, which was bordered by a narrow belt of cacti, palm and Tamarind trees. We bumped uncomfortably along the uneven ground for a further few miles, the wheels of the car occasionally sinking into the deep sand, until eventually we reached the mouth of a river, where the road ended. The wagon and its driver returned to Vohipeno, as from now on I would be continuing the whole way by filanzana. The river flowed inland into a wide lagoon, on the far side of which was the forest for which I was making.

My porters and I had to cross this lagoon in a piroque, a native canoe made from a hollowed-out tree-trunk, similar to those I had seen off the Comoro Islands. Four of the porters with the filanzana made the crossing first, while I took some pictures of them with my cine-camera. The sky had cleared, the sun was shining, and the deep blue of the water reflected the boat and its brown occupants, while beyond in the background was the cool dark green of the forest.

Before long the canoe returned for the remaining porters, Piera, and myself. It is necessary to sit absolutely still in these native canoes, as they overturn very easily, and it is sometimes hard to keep the balance. The water looked cool and refreshing, and quite tempting for a bathe, but I had no wish to fall in, especially as Piera told me there were many crocodiles here. "People usually take a rifle to scare them away," he added in French. "Not that they will come now, for it is the wrong time of the day." I hoped he was right, although it would have been interesting to have had a close view of the creatures and the

opportunity, perhaps, of taking a photograph of them from the safety of the shore.

After crossing the lagoon I was hoisted up into my filanzana, and we plunged straight into dense jungle. The tiny woodcutters' track, which, I had been told, would lead eventually to the village for which I was making, had evidently not been followed for a long while, for it proved to be completely overgrown in places with thick undergrowth through which my men had to blaze a trail with axes before I could pass. It was intensely hot and the air humid. We had to cross several gullies with bogs and pools of stagnant, evil-smelling water, very malarial and unhealthy, with swarms of mosquitoes. The porters frequently sank to their knees in these bogs while carrying me across, and on one occasion our way led through a wide pool, so deep that my men had to wade through with the water above their waists. So strong were their arms, however, that they were able to hold me up in my chair above their heads, and so saved me from getting wet.

In these tropical forests near the east coast, so unlike those in the Tanala hill country, one is much troubled by numerous small leeches, which drop on one from the dense overhanging greenery and undergrowth and which, if one is not careful to flick them off any exposed part immediately, will quickly suck a quantity of one's blood. By wearing my short weatherproof coat, in spite of the heat, and turning up its collar, and with my legs protected by long mosquito boots, I escaped attack; but the unfortunate porters, with their bare legs and arms, suffered considerably, although, judging by the way they laughed and joked as they continually flicked the leeches off each other, they did not seem to mind, in spite of the fact that their legs were often left bleeding profusely. I could not but feel concerned for them, although Piera explained that the natives here are so accustomed to leeches that they think nothing of them at all, and I need not let it trouble me.

After an hour or so we came to a wide stream, which had to be crossed in a very leaky canoe. Halfway across, the boat started to fill with water, but by baling out continuously we just managed to reach the opposite bank with one end of the boat partly submerged!

On once again, this time through open and more hilly country, sweeping stretches of downland, with dry and burnt-up grass, and here and there sheltered hollows thickly wooded with palms; the main feature being the Traveller's Tree (*Ravenala*

*Madagascariensis*). This beautiful palm is noted for its constant supply of good water, the result of condensed moisture from the air which gradually collects in the tree and may be obtained by splitting the base of the leaves at the stem. This curious phenomenon must evidently have earned for the palm its vernacular name, for no wayfarer need go thirsty however great the drought, in the vicinity of the "Traveller's Tree", which is to be found everywhere in the lower levels of the south-east of the island.

I was struck by the very marked difference in the characteristics of the forest scenery down here near the coast to that higher up towards the mountains around Fort-Carnot. Owing to the frequent heavy rainfalls, the woods of the latter district were very green, with luxuriant undergrowth and masses of ferns of every variety, while this lower forest land, having had little rain compared with the former, was more or less dried up, the grass in the open spaces being burnt and yellow, while the countryside, although undulating, had no high hills and was very sparsely inhabited, with great expanses of downland altogether void of any signs of human habitation.

After cutting our way through several more patches of dense jungle to further low hills beyond, for the most part bare of trees, a short ascent brought us to the forest village I was seeking, with people of the Antaimoro tribe, a more primitive type than those at Ivato and very similar to the Tanala.

We had been four hours on the march, and I much looked forward to a rest and my lunch, for it was long after noon. The hut offered was too dirty for me to go inside, and I preferred to spread my coat on the dusty ground under a palm tree, of which there were one or two around the little collection of bamboo huts that comprised the village. Many of the women, carrying their babies on their backs, came out to watch me eat my lunch, and I managed to take some photographs and colour film before an unexpected downpour of torrential rain put a stop to my photography. Hastily gathering up my things, I sought shelter under a verandah running alongside one of the huts, larger than the rest. It was overrun with ants, but clean mats were spread for me on the boarded floor, and here I rested for an hour, while my porters ate their rice and chatted with the villagers. Rolling my coat into a pillow, I lay down full length and tried to sleep, for I was very tired and had a severe headache, caused possibly by the glare of the sun on the sea when I was taking cine-photographs by the shore earlier in the day.

It was still raining, although not so heavily later in the afternoon, when we pushed off once more for our return journey to Vohipeno. Piera said the porters were taking a shorter route, through a different part of the forest which they knew, and which would bring us out eventually on the road quite close to Vohipeno.

The track, as before, was practically non-existent, and it was frequently necessary to carve our way through the jungle. The leeches were worse than ever here, and as Piera flicked them off my shoulders I was thankful for the protection of my coat, with its collar well turned up for the occasion. These leeches of the Madagascar forests are very small, but swell to double their size after sucking blood. Unless flicked off immediately, they stick to the skin and are very hard to remove.

It was nearly dark by the time we rejoined the road, and the rain was again coming down in torrents. At last Vohipeno came in sight, and thankfully I stopped at the bungalow of the Ferries. I was wet and tired, and Madame kindly insisted that, after I had returned to the guest-house to change into dry clothes, I should come round to dine and spend the evening in the comfort of their bungalow. This I was very happy to do. My kind hosts were, I think, a little concerned about the possibility of my having an attack of fever, for I had been badly bitten by mosquitoes, and they insisted that I should ward off the danger by a double dose of quinine. I took their advice, with good result, for I felt much better the next morning after a comfortable night.

I left Vohipeno on June 10, Payet calling for me at 7.30 a.m. He had brought, instead of the old open touring car, a small closed saloon which he called his "de luxe" car. It was a beautiful morning after yesterday's rain, and at this early hour not too hot. I had arranged to make a special detour in order to visit a tiny riverside Antaimoro village off the beaten track, towards Manakara, where lived, so Payet had told me, people who, like other of the Antaimoro, were for the most part Moslems, and where there was the surprising sight of a mosque presided over by an ancient Mullah who, although a Malagasy belonging to the Antaimoro tribe, was, like many of the other villagers, a Mohammedan by religion. Monsieur Ferrie had laughed when I told him this story and had said that Payet was making it up in order to take me a longer drive back, and he had never heard of the existence of this Mullah, far less of his mosque, which he could not believe existed. In

spite of Monsieur Ferrie's scepticism, however, I decided to take Payet at his word, for, having lived in the district for twenty years, I felt he must know a good deal about it.

After striking inland through some groves of fine mango trees, and passing a big coffee plantation, with its dark glossy leaves, we came to a large village where a picturesque market was in full swing. Stalls were placed beneath the shade of giant eucalyptus and mango trees. Brilliant patches of sunshine threw up the colour of the red earth and the bright shades of orange, crimson, and yellow of some of the lambas worn by the women. I took the opportunity of making some motion pictures, for the light was perfect for colour film. The people seemed a merry crowd, laughing and chattering among themselves while they bargained for and sold their various goods. Unlike the more primitive forest folk, they did not mind my camera, but seemed to regard it as a joke, only a few running away.

After leaving here we left the main road, and before long came to a small group of thatched native huts with one in the centre much larger than the rest. This, Payet informed me, was the mosque I had come to see. He knocked on the side of an adjacent hut, and sure enough there emerged the mullah, a most remarkable-looking old man with piercing eyes and fine Arabesque features. He wore a scarlet Turkish fez and the white robes of a Mohammedan. He showed me the interior of the hut used as a mosque, without my actually going inside, for to do this I would, according to custom, have had to remove my shoes, and the floor did not look too clean. The room was empty except for a roughly constructed recess and dais at the eastern end. This was the holy place facing Mecca, and, characteristic of all Mohammedan mosques, the raised boarded floor was strewn with a few praying-mats, in this case of plaited straw, and was partitioned off at the far end into a second small room used by the faithful, so the Mullah explained in Malagasy to Payet, as a place for washing their feet before they came to pray.

I was then shown the name of the mosque, written for me by the mullah in Arabic letters similar to those in the Sora-be writing, the old man afterwards allowing me to take his photograph outside. It was the first time, I gathered, that this mosque had been photographed, and few, if any, Europeans had seen it or knew of its existence. By now a number of the villagers had gathered around with their children, and were staring at me

with much interest. I took a photograph of three dear little boys, who had made themselves miniature tom-toms and bows and arrows. They solemnly beat on their tom-toms while I photographed them.

On leaving, we soon regained the road to Manakara, which led over some rather hilly country back to the coast. While climbing a steep incline the car came to a standstill, and was found to have been overfilled with oil. A long delay in the hot sun and at last, after much tinkering on the part of Payet and his boy assistant, whom apparently he always took with him, the car was made to start. We had gone only a mile or two, however, when something was heard to fall out. Being halfway up another long and steep hill, we did not draw up until reaching the top, and then it was discovered that the boy had left the cranking handle in the bonnet, and it had fallen out and disappeared. Another half-hour wait, while the two went in search, and I beguiled the time away by eating my lunch of biscuits, hard-boiled eggs, and bananas.

Payet and the boy returned at last with the missing handle, and off we started once more through a fine forest of Traveller's Trees, where we stopped while Payet cut into the trunk at the base of the leaves and showed me how the stream of water spurts out. It looked fairly clear, but I did not venture to drink it, although I believe this water is, as stated, perfectly pure.

Leaving the forest, we crossed some open downland with a few oxen grazing, and reached the hotel at Manakara during the afternoon. I had arranged with Payet to start the next day on the long and very difficult coast drive to Mananjary, when many lagoons would have to be crossed on rafts, and where the road was said to be exceedingly bad. Although Payet had proved most entertaining and informative about the people and countryside, I had little faith in either him or his cars from the driver's point of view, and regretted I had already booked him for this journey. He assured me that he would guarantee my safely reaching Manakara, and with that I had to rest content.

I found there were swarms of ants and other unpleasant insects in the little hotel, with the result that I passed a restless night and welcomed the dawn. After some coffee and bread-and-butter soon after six o'clock I was ready for Payet, who drove up in the ancient tourer. He explained that it was stronger than the other car and raised higher from the ground, and as the coast road was very bad it would be safer, and we should

run less risk of sinking in the sand.

I had my doubts! The old relic looked as if it would hardly hold together; the footboards were brittle with rust, one of the mudguards was broken, and the wheels were also encrusted with rust. After Payet had assured me that he had been careful to take an ample supply of petrol, several tins having been put in the back of the car, we started off at 6.45 a.m., Paoly and the boy assistant behind with the baggage, myself in front next to Payet.

The road, which soon deteriorated into a grassy track full of bumps and holes, followed alongside the seashore, for the road to Mananjary follows the coast nearly all the way. Unfortunately, there was a change in the weather, and the sky that morning was grey and overcast. Nevertheless, the varied greens of the tropical vegetation—cacti, palms, and tamarind trees—that bordered the track and grew in profusion almost to the water's edge were very beautiful. Soon we reached the first of the long chain of lagoons that characterizes this part of the east coast, five of which had to be crossed during the day. There are no bridges, and one is rowed, punted, or in some cases hauled, across, the car being run on to a big wooden raft, which latter is invariably found to be on the far side of the water and has to be hauled by would-be passengers. These lagoons are the main feature of the south-east coast; they run inland from the sea and sometimes parallel with it, and have the appearance of great glassy lakes or very wide rivers.

After we had been rowed across the first of the lagoons on a raft by a number of natives we closely followed the shore for some distance, the car ploughing with difficulty through sand, in which we were in continual danger of sinking. We had barely got out of it and on to a grass track above the beach when the inner tube of the front off-side tyre burst through its outer cover, which latter was very old, judging from its patched condition. A delay of half an hour while a spare tyre was put on, and then off again, only to stop once more as the second tyre gave out! Another long delay followed, while both tyres were patched up, and as it was nearly mid-day I ate my hard-boiled eggs, biscuits, and bananas beneath the shelter of some palm trees near the edge of the sea and watched the great foaming breakers of the Indian Ocean as they raced in and broke upon the smooth sandy beach.

Dark clouds were gathering, and, although they gave way now and then to a flicker of sunshine, a drizzling rain fell at

intervals, the forerunner, I feared, of a torrential downpour. The "road"—so called—became worse and worse, and I began to fear the old car would never hold out to our journey's end, for several times the engine had given trouble, and when we had yet a third puncture I had uncomfortable visions of being stranded with Payet by the wayside for the night, and of never reaching Mananjary at all. He was rather agitated himself, as he saw I was annoyed at the state of his tyres, and tried his best to make excuses and to cheer me up by saying it was all in the day's work and part and parcel of the interest and excitement of motoring in Madagascar !

The next few hours were uneventful. My general impression of the scenery was of wooded glades running parallel with the sea on my right, and great stretches of forest inland to the left, opening now and then to wide spaces of bare undulating downs with clumps of the Traveller's Tree and other palms in the hollows, while at intervals one caught enchanting glimpses of the glassy waters of a great lagoon as it wound its way inland from the sea, the forest in some instances reaching down to the water's edge. As a background, far away on the horizon, was the distant outline of the high mountains of the central plateau silhouetted purple against the sky.

On reaching a lagoon, it was often entertaining to watch the natives, of whom there would frequently be a little group waiting to cross to the opposite shore either by public raft or in their own canoes ; the men carrying bundles, and the women with their babies strapped on to their backs, wound tightly inside their mother's lambas. On one occasion we passed a whole family who were evidently moving from one home to another, for they appeared to be bringing all their belongings with them, the smaller objects carried on their heads in big baskets, and the larger ones hung along poles resting on the shoulders of the men. A characteristic feature was their little iron three-legged cooking-pot, beloved of all the Malagasy, and from which they are never parted.

I gathered that cars were seldom seen here, judging by the excitement we caused, and by the way the people, and especially the children, ran out of their homes as we passed. It happened to be a Sunday, and from one of the villages of little bamboo thatched huts came the familiar sound of a church bell. Soon I saw the church with the congregation going inside—a hut thatched like the rest but larger, and with a wooden cross at one end of the roof. This, I gathered, was one of the little

churches of the Anglican Mission ; several having been started along this part of the east coast, all under an Antaimoro priest who visits his scattered congregations by canoe over the rivers and lagoons.

After further delay caused by still another puncture, the last lagoon was safely crossed, and a few more miles brought us to Mananjary just as dusk was falling. It was eleven hours since we had left Manakara in the early morning, and the hotel was a welcome sight. It was built of wood with the bedrooms in a bungalow on the opposite side of the road, all opening out on to a verandah and partitioned off one from another by high bamboo screens, open at the top and through which one heard every sound made by one's neighbours. After some supper at the café across the road I went early to bed, being tired after the long day, but the night was not a restful one, for on one side of me I had a native family with a fretful infant whose mother made gurgling noises to quieten it at intervals, and on the other were a couple of men—French, I gathered—one of whom had a bad cough and the other a loud snore.

I succeeded in rousing myself at 5 a.m. next morning and dressed by candlelight, drinking a hasty cup of hot coffee brought me by Paoly, whom I helped carry the baggage, which was piled on to a barrow and wheeled to the station of the public mail car near by.

Having been given a front corner seat behind the driver, I found myself the only European among a crowd of Malagasy, which included two native soldiers. During the last forty-eight hours I had experienced a very painful and irritating sensation under the ball of my right foot, on which were two hard little lumps. I feared these lumps must be caused by unpleasant sand-fleas against which I had been warned, known by the name of "jiggers". The female of the species burrows under the skin, usually either on the ball of the foot or between the toe and the nail, and lays her eggs there, causing swelling as the eggs develop. Inflammation rapidly spreads, and unless the insect is removed the result may be serious, with a danger of blood-poisoning. I had been told that the natives were experts in removing "jiggers". If given a needle, they would remove the flea, together with its bag of eggs, causing the minimum of discomfort, and I decided to get this done as soon as I arrived back at the hotel at Fianarantsoa. Meanwhile, I tried to forget the irritation in the enjoyment of the wonderful scenery through which we passed. The dawn had been grey and misty, but as

we climbed upwards from the coast the sun broke through the clouds and there was every prospect of a glorious day.

About 11.30 we had an hour's halt for lunch at a hill village, and later, after stopping on several other occasions in order to deliver and collect the mail from tiny wayside post-boxes, we reached Fianarantsoa about 3.30, after nine hours' motoring.

Although tired, I had found the drive of great interest, the scenery all the way from the coast, through the forests and up into the hills of the high plateau, being magnificent; for we had to climb roughly 6,000 feet to reach Fianarantsoa, which is at a slightly higher altitude than Tananarive. The road wound up and down steep densely wooded valleys between high banks, the rich red soil of which was in striking contrast to the bright green of the many varieties of ferns and shrubs which covered them. Now and then one caught glimpses of a fine river or sparkling streams and rushing waterfalls. Once the road led through a forest of Traveller's Trees, a truly wonderful sight. The long broad leaves, similar to those of the banana tree, formed a semicircle spreading out from the top of the palm-like trunks like giant ferns.

At another point we passed through coffee plantations, and there were also many mango and papita trees. In short, rich and luxurious vegetation of a wonderful variety of green, lovely against its background of red earth, was to be found all the way up from the coast. Later, had I mounted higher still into the mountains of Imerina around Ambositra and Antsirabe, and on to Tananarive, trees would have been scarce and the tropical vegetation would have ceased, and instead there would have been wide open spaces of bare rolling hills, the grass sparse and burnt up, the air cool and exhilarating, scenery and climate of an entirely different nature from that leading down through the forests to the hot and steamy east coast.

I remained in Fianarantsoa just over a week, during which time I planned my next journey to the extreme south-east of Madagascar, at Fort-Dauphin, from where later I hoped to cut across to the west coast at Tuléar. On arrival back at the Fianarantsoa hotel I had shown my painful foot to the proprietress, whereupon she had promptly called her house-boy, who, she assured me, was an expert at extracting "jiggers". He appeared amused at the size of mine, regarding them as a joke, rolling from side to side with laughter and exclaiming in French, "Oh, how big! Oh, what a big one! Two, two! Oh, how big!" Then, taking a needle—which I had cauterized with a

lighted match—he skilfully extracted the insects, but owing to slight suppuration beneath the skin the process was not easy and took some time. It was three weeks before the irritation stopped entirely, but otherwise I had no ill effects.

## CHAPTER X

### ON THE ROAD TO THE SOUTH

As it was unlikely I should be making any more journeys by filanzana, I decided to dispense with the services of Paoly and manage for myself on my journey to Fort-Dauphin and across to the south-west coast, although I knew at first I should miss a personal boy, as Paoly had been useful in many ways, especially as an interpreter.

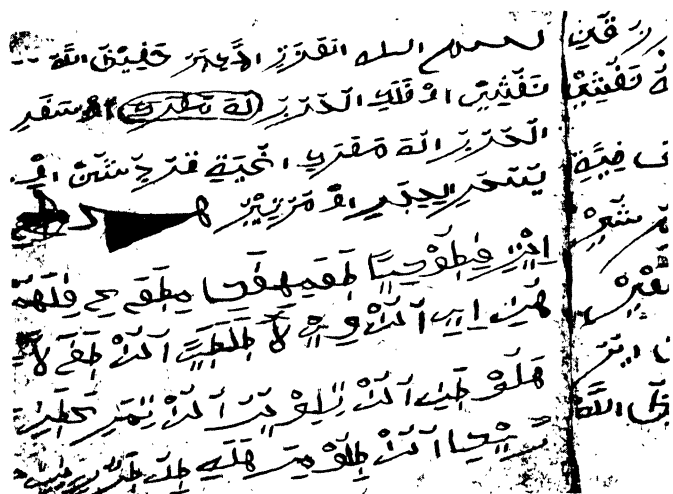
There is no railway to the south, and the safest and best way, as well as the cheapest, is to travel by the weekly public bus, which, as it is responsible for carrying the mail, is bound to bring one to one's destination in the end, in spite of possible breakdowns en route; whereas the native private-hired cars are so unreliable one may easily be stuck halfway and be stranded by the roadside indefinitely.

The car is usually very crowded, and it is necessary to book one's ticket beforehand. Seats may not be reserved, so it is first come first served, although the front part of the car behind the driver is usually kept, if possible, for any Europeans who may happen to be travelling.

This journey of several hundred miles took, I was told, two days, and very long days at that, for the start was made at 4.30, or at latest five o'clock in the morning, and one did not arrive at one's destination until sunset, and then only if no breakdowns occurred en route! On June 20 I accordingly found myself at 4.30 am. waiting at the bus station of the Transud just outside Fianarantsoa, from where we were due to start at five o'clock for Fort-Dauphin, breaking the journey for the night at Betroka, about halfway. It was still dark and the sky thickly spangled with stars, while the air at this early hour was cold, and one needed a warm coat. The pavement alongside which the bus would draw up was crowded with waiting natives surrounded by various bundles and packages, and with their lambas swathed tightly around them for warmth. There were also several Malagasy soldiers and a Frenchman, who, with his



EFFIGIES AT IVATO (see p. 82)



EXTRACTS FROM A SORA-BÉ HOLY BOOK (see p. 83)



A MAHAFALY TRIBESMAN (see p. 118)



BLAZING A TRAIL THROUGH THE FOREST (see p. 87)

wife and two children, had only recently reached Madagascar after a very hot passage from Marseilles. They told me they were going as far as Betroka.

There appeared to be one or two other Europeans, but it was still too dark to see much. Like my fellow passengers, I, too, was standing in the midst of my baggage, and, although travelling as light as possible, I seemed to have a good deal, for beyond a couple of suitcases, my cameras and films, there was my bedding hold-all and camp bed. I missed Paoly and felt a bit lost at first, standing there amongst the crowd of chattering natives. When the bus arrived there was a rush for seats. The driver, a Malagasy belonging to the Hova tribe, saw me and beckoned me to the right-hand corner seat in the front. I was very grateful, for the car was packed. There was a broad luggage rack above which took my rucksacks, small hold-all, and case of films. The rest of my luggage had to go in the *Camion*—the luggage car—that followed behind. Punctually at five o'clock we were off along the road that led up and over the steep hill, on the summit of which Fianarantsoa is built, and out to the open country, the road being bordered with eucalyptus and mimosa trees. Shortly before six o'clock one saw the first faint signs of the coming dawn—a pale-green light in the east lighting the sky behind the dark silhouette of the hills. The stars were still visible, and one of immense size and brilliancy shone from the midst of the pale emerald light, which was getting brighter every moment. Soon the sky became suffused with rose colour, the stars disappeared, and the sun arose, bathing the landscape in a soft golden light.

The road now passed over undulating country, bare and rocky, with short dried-up grass. We climbed uphill for some distance, and then, before dropping down to our first halt at the village of Ambalavao, a wonderful effect was seen from the top of the pass. On our right, a steep mountain-side covered with huge boulders of fantastic shapes, grey and bare except for the lichen which covered them in places. On our left a sheer drop, down which the road wound in sharp curves to a basin-like valley far below, beyond which were further hills, while immediately in front, on the far side of the valley, were ranges of high mountains with jagged peaks, whose summits glowed with palest rose shading to a deep crimson from the rising sun. The lower slopes of the mountains were tinged with violet, sloping down to what I took to be a great lake spreading over most of the valley, but which turned out to be

a sea of white steamy mist rising from the ground and having the appearance of calm water, with here and there; faintly discernible, little islands covered with trees. By the time we reached the level of the valley this mist had practically disappeared, and the hot sun was shining brilliantly from a cloudless blue sky. A halt of twenty minutes was made at the village of Ambalavao to allow passengers to get some coffee at the little inn. I was hungry after the early start, and was glad of some biscuits and a banana I had brought with me to eat en route.

In addition to the French soldier and his family I found there were two other Europeans among my fellow passengers, both from Fort-Dauphin. One was the manager of the little general shop, the other a Government official from the Treasury Department. Also, apart from the crowd of natives that packed the bus, was a youngish man who spoke good French and a little English, and who kindly offered me his seat on the shady side of the bus after we left Ambalavao. He told me he was a Malagasy by birth, but had now become an American citizen, having lived in America for the past ten years. He said he was by trade a gold prospector and a mining engineer, and had begun by working in gold mines in South Africa in his youth. Returning to Madagascar, he had discovered a mica mine in the south and had helped to get it working for the authorities. He was, he said, returning to the district of this mine to see if the original one he had started was still in use.

It was now becoming intensely hot, with clouds of red sandy dust from off the dried-up road. Around and on the outskirts of Ambalavao there were many fine eucalyptus and mimosa trees and hedges of cactus; but soon the scenery entirely changed, giving place to a further vast expanse of rolling hills, volcanic in origin, covered with giant boulders, and intersected with deep gorges. For miles there was little sign of any human habitation.

We were now nearing the extremity of the Betsileo country, and would shortly be entering that of the wild Bara and Antandroy tribes. About 11.30 we stopped for lunch at Ihosy, a pretty little village half hidden amidst a cool and green oasis of trees—eucalyptus, mimosa, palms—while everywhere vivid splashes of scarlet from bushes of poinsettia gave welcome touches of colour to the scene.

I managed to get some food at the little hotel, whose cheerful French proprietor promised to give me a good room for the night on my return journey north in a few weeks' time. On re-taking my place in the bus, I was more than thankful for my seat on

the shady side, for the heat was intense, and the sun blinds inadequate.

We had been hanging about for nearly an hour waiting to start, when we learned that the delay was caused by the non-arrival of the Camion containing the mail and our registered baggage. Apparently it had broken down. Moreover, we ourselves were in difficulty owing to the failure of the battery, our driver declaring it was not safe to proceed with insufficient lights, for now we could not arrive before dark at Betroka, where we were to spend the night. It was hoped a new battery would soon be found.

At 4.30 we were still patiently waiting by the roadside. I, fortunately, had brought some tea in my thermos, which I shared with the poor tired French mother and her children. Another two hours passed, after which Monsieur Gence (the gold prospector) suggested we should have some dinner. We returned to the inn and were given soup and baked eggs, and what I felt I most needed—a cooling drink of mineral water.

It was not until after 7.30 in the evening that we were able to proceed on our journey, a new battery having at last been fixed to the car. We were all very weary after our wait of eight hours; darkness had long since fallen, and we were told by the conductor that we could not reach Betroka till after midnight.

After leaving Ihosy, the air suddenly became cool as we crossed a high plateau, climbing to 4,000 feet. From here we crossed a flat desert without water or trees, and finally dropped down to Betroka, half hidden in its little oasis of green from the eucalyptus and other trees and shrubs which have been planted around the village. I was too sleepy then, however, to notice anything, for it was nearly two o'clock in the morning! We drew up at the bus station, a big yard adjoining a small hotel, across to which Monsieur Gence helped me carry my suitcase. A sleepy-eyed little native boy showed me to my room up a wooden outside staircase, leading to a long verandah, on to which all the bedrooms opened. Tired out, after my early start at 4.30 a.m., twenty-two hours before, I tumbled into bed, having been told by the boy that the bus would be starting off again about four o'clock—in under three hours! I knew four o'clock or thereabouts was the normal time for starting these long journeys, but had hoped on this occasion, owing to our delayed arrival, it would be altered to a later hour.

After a few snatches of sleep I got up shortly before four

o'clock and went in search of the car, only to find that the boy had made a mistake. There was no sign of any sort of departure, and a group of natives seated round a camp fire in the yard told me the bus would not be leaving until 7.30, as the driver must have time to sleep. Thankfully I went back to bed until seven o'clock, when I came down into the coffee-room and had some breakfast with Monsieur Gence.

Betroka is the junction for Tulkar as well as for Fort-Dauphin, and some of the passengers remained behind, among them the French family. In consequence the bus was less crowded, although we picked up a few more natives before leaving. We now struck further southwards among the Bara tribe, and I was much impressed by the magnificent physique of these natives—the men, for the most part naked except for loin-cloths, were very tall, slim, and muscular, with fiery eyes. Their skin was dark, and they wore their hair either in little short rat-tail plaits or rolled into quaint snake-like twists over the top of their heads. Some of them carried spears, and physically they were the finest types I had seen in the island. Their quaint red houses of sun-baked mud consist of two storeys; the large room below is reserved for their cattle and the storing of maize, the family being content to crowd together in a loft under the roof. The road continued over a great expanse of comparatively flat country, mostly uninhabited. At intervals we came across large droves of fine-looking cattle—the Zebu, or hump-backed oxen of Madagascar, for cattle-raising is the chief industry in the south and takes the place of the rice fields of the province of Imerina, and the more northern parts of the island. Monsieur Gence told me that, in addition to cattle-raising, wheat and maize could easily be grown in these places south of Betroka if the people would but take the trouble to cultivate the land. He said that the type of country here closely resembled parts of Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, but, unlike the former, had the advantage of plentiful streams of water, making artificial irrigation of the land unnecessary. Nothing had been done with it, however, and it had gone to waste, becoming just a great desert of wild bush and scrub; very different from certain other districts in the island, where cultivation has resulted in great quantities of maize and manioc, and where the country is rich in coffee, sugar, tobacco, rice, raffia, sisal, pepper, and peanut oil.

In the far distance was a range of mountains, the tail end of the central plateau which we were now leaving behind. From

now onwards we should be crossing the vast plains of the far south. First, however, we came to a small range of bare and rocky hills, valuable for the mica that is found there. One or two mines have been put into operation by French effort, including that started in the past and mentioned by Monsieur Gence. He seemed to think it a great pity these mines had never so far been properly opened up and worked to full advantage, as much money could be made here. "The work is left to the natives," he added; "they gather the mica and sell it to the white man, who in turn re-sells it at a profit, but nothing has ever been done on a large scale as it might be. The climate is probably blame. Madagascar is not a white man's country. Heat prevents hard physical labour, and the natives are lazy and will not do more than they are obliged to do."

It is the same with the gold. Monsieur Gence told me that there are valuable sites in the north of Madagascar practically untouched. He said he himself had found one or two large nuggets in that part of the country, and more undoubtedly remained. It is true a certain amount of gold-digging was being done, but not enough, for, although the potential wealth of the island is considerable, most of the sources of gold, iron, copper, nickel, and lead are as yet untapped. Notwithstanding, a considerable amount has been done with other exports, and Madagascar, with its adjacent isles of the Comoro, is, I was told, responsible for 72 per cent of the world's natural vanilla.

The bus finally dropped Monsieur Gence at his request by the roadside near a dip in the hills. "My mine is over there," he said, pointing in that direction. "I am going to walk to it." The last I saw of my companion, he was shouldering his big pack and preparing to set off on his surprise visit to the little mining station he had left ten years ago. Perhaps he will have found a greater development there than he expected, in spite of his lack of faith in French enterprise.

At mid-day we stopped at a small village, where we stayed for lunch. There was no hotel, but the Treasury official from Fort-Dauphin kindly invited me to a meal at the shack of two friends of his, mining engineers in connection with the local mica, with whom he was staying a few days.

Later I found time to take some photographs of the village market. I saw many interesting types; one a woman, her face smeared over with what looked like white paint. I was told she was ill and hoped that way to get relief. *How*, I could not quite see!

After leaving here for Ambovombe among the Antandroy tribe, the scenery entirely changed, and was different from anything yet seen, with an extraordinary vegetation all its own, peculiar to Madagascar, and found nowhere else in the island. The road passed over great and solitary deserts of scrub, and through forest belts with the strange bottle-shaped baobab trees, flowering aloes with a flaming red blossom and a host of many varieties. Most weird of all were the didiera and antsiholitra trees, the trunks of which were tall, slender, and covered, like the branches, with short sharp spikes. Unlike the other trees, the branches of the didiera bend curiously towards, instead of with, the wind. With their long, bare, attenuated branches silhouetted against the sky, they resemble great skeleton hands with bony and crooked fingers reaching upwards and in all directions, their silhouette giving an air of strangeness and fantasy to a landscape that reminded me of the drawings of Rackham, and was quite different from that found anywhere else in Madagascar.

For miles we passed through uninhabited country—no villages, no people, merely great stretches of parched and dried-up forest on either side of the road, with unfamiliar plants of weird shapes. A silent land—no sound except the occasional cry of some lemur—a land in which one felt nothing had ever changed.

And so, on still further south to the small market town of Ambovombe in the midst of the Antandroy tribe. A halt was made here for more petrol, and while the cans were being filled I took the opportunity of taking a few photographs, for it was market day. The people were of an interesting, though primitive, type. They got rather excited when I took out my camera, especially a wild-eyed individual, naked except for a loin-cloth, with his face elaborately tattooed. He shook his fist at me, and then, crying "*Fady, fady*," held out his hand for money, jumping up and down meanwhile. "*Fady*" means "forbidden" in Malagasy, and I gathered he was demanding money because he had noticed I had taken a photograph of him. Meanwhile, the majority of the people had run away. I had no change with me, and as I had wandered some distance from the bus, thought it advisable to return, the man seeming rather angry, although a few others, who were looking on, were laughing. Later, when safely back in the bus we were continuing towards Fort Dauphin, another tribesman, with a similar fierce appearance and carrying a long javelin, sprang out from the side of the road

in front of us and back again. A fellow passenger explained that he was probably quite harmless and merely an Antandroy professional dancer.

About an hour's drive beyond Ambovombe the driver kindly stopped a few minutes for me at the sisal plantation of Monsieur Charles Groult, to whom I had a letter of introduction from his parents in Fianarantsoa. I was fortunate in finding Monsieur Groult at home. He said that on my return—for I would have to pass this district, Amboasary, on my way to Tulcar—he hoped I would lunch with him at his bungalow, and afterwards he would take me to see some of the big white lemurs, which were very numerous in this part of the forest. I was grateful for this promise, and told him I hoped to be able to take advantage of it later.

After leaving here the road passed through further dense forests, opening out at last to wooded valleys, when the scenery underwent an entire change, becoming hilly and semi-tropical, with green luxurious vegetation and sparkling streams, a dramatic contrast indeed to the desert regions of parched and dried-up bush to which I had grown accustomed during the day. By now it was 6 p.m., and almost dark, and the driver put our lights on.

When about twelve miles or so from Fort-Dauphin we had to cross a wide river by ferry. A lorry coming from the opposite direction had just come off the raft, which served as the ferry-boat, and wanted to pass. There was not room, however, for two vehicles, the road being very narrow, with a steep drop down on either side to fields below, so our driver started to back the bus in order to reach a wider part. As he did so the French storekeeper from Fort-Dauphin hastily jumped out on to the road, slamming the door after him. He was the only European, except myself, left in the bus, the others consisting of a Roman Catholic native priest in his black cassock, and a small number of Malagasy men and women who were the only ones of the passengers continuing the journey to its end, at Fort-Dauphin. In spite, however, of our lightened load, we were still comparatively crowded, owing to the large number of packages and native baskets piled up in every available space of the compartment. We backed slowly along the narrow roadway, difficult to see in the dark, when the car gave a sudden swerve, the driver having miscalculated the amount of space on either side, and the next moment the off-side wheels of the bus were over the side of the bank, and with the driver frantically wrenching

at the steering-wheel we slowly started to tip over. Just as I was fearing the worst and thinking that we were about to overturn down the bank, the near-side wheels struck on the edge and we hung suspended, while my fellow passengers and myself clung on to the back of the seats in front, which were now at an uncomfortably acute angle. One or two of the women screamed for a moment, but there was no panic, and they kept quite still while the driver tugged at the door-handle, which had got jammed and would not open. Mercifully, he had had the presence of mind to switch off the engine immediately, so the danger of fire was averted. Several uncomfortable and anxious moments passed before the door was finally made to open, and we jumped out to safety.

The escape for all had been a narrow one, for had the bus gone over the edge of the bank a yard or so further on the drop was steeper, and we should almost certainly have overturned completely, and crashed to the ground below. To have met my end in a public mail bus in Madagascar would have been very prosaic after having successfully avoided the other and far more picturesque means available in that land, such as fever and crocodiles, to say nothing of falling from my filanzana into a ravine when travelling through the precipitous mountain gorges of the Tanala forests!

An apathetic group of natives from a near-by village soon began to collect around the partially overturned car and started feebly to try to lever it up by means of planks, but in vain, for there were too few men to help. The storekeeper remarked that we should probably be here all night. "I felt the bus might go over the edge when the driver started to back ; that is why I jumped out," he added. Apparently it had never occurred to him that he might have warned me to do the same!

I sat down on a rock by the roadside, dead tired after no real sleep the night before, and with the prospect of none now, but just as I had resigned myself to putting up with the situation as best I could, the storekeeper, who had gone off to investigate, came hurrying back to tell me that a friend of his with a small lorry, just arrived from Fort-Dauphin, would be willing to return, taking him, the Malagasy priest, and myself as passengers. Our hand luggage was put into the back with the priest, and there was just room for me and the storekeeper beside the driver. And so, about eight o'clock, our adventures ended at last, we reached the little French inn at Fort-Dauphin, and thankful I was to get there!

After a welcome hot meal, the manager took me across the road to my room in the annexe, a row of single-roomed wooden bungalows overlooking the sea, glassy calm under the starlit sky. It was too dark to see much, but, flashing here and there among the pine trees and palms that grew down towards the shore, I was surprised to see hundreds of fireflies, like tiny fairy lamps. Suddenly I felt I was not in Madagascar but in the South of France! The very air, mild and scented, seemed to breathe more of that part of the world than of the tropics. I appeared to have reached a totally different region both as regards scenery and climate, and it was almost impossible to realize that I was still in the same country as that in which I had awakened that morning in Ihosy.

## CHAPTER XI

### AT FORT-DAUPHIN AND SANTA LUCE

I SLEPT late, and on opening the bungalow door next morning my room was flooded with light. I looked straight out on to a view of the lovely curving bay of Fort-Dauphin, with its fringe of white sand and foam-flecked breakers rolling in upon the shore, and its background of jagged mountain peaks. Below me was the landing stage and quay of the little harbour, where several fishermen's boats were moored. The water looked tempting, and I hoped for a bathe, but was warned there were many sharks along the coast.

After coffee and rolls, which were brought to me by a native servant from the hotel, I called on the District Administrator, who kindly promised to find a reliable car and native driver to take me, later on, across to the port of Tul'ar on the south-west coast—a three days' journey along a recently laid road only open in dry weather, when certain river-beds, unbridged, were passable. He thought, as there had been no rain to speak of for some months, I would get through without difficulty. It would be necessary to hire a car, as the public mail bus does not run across this part of the country.

Before venturing on another long journey, however, I felt I needed a short rest. Moreover, there was much to see of interest in the vicinity of Fort-Dauphin, and I decided to stay here for a couple of weeks, during which time I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. and Mrs. Braoton. The former is Superintendent of the school and church at Fort-Dauphin, belonging to the

Mission of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. One afternoon, soon after my arrival, Mr. and Mrs. Brauton called for me in their car, and drove me round the beautiful circular road known as Lebanon, where, on a bold promontory, shaded with pine trees, stands the mission station, with its church and boarding-school for the children of American missionaries working in Madagascar. The views of the nearby ranges of mountains around the coast-line, seen through the pines and other trees from the edge of the low cliffs, the latter green with palms and semi-tropical vegetation, reminded me, apart from the beautiful white orchids and other flora peculiar to the country, of parts of the French Riviera, so different was it from the rest of the great island.

The climate of Fort-Dauphin is very much healthier than in other parts of the coast, especially that in the east and west, and French officials working in the south of the island often send their wives and children here for a holiday. Leave to Europe is given only every five years, and the difficult climate in most parts of Madagascar makes itself felt in time on most Europeans.

Returning from the drive, I had tea with the Brautons, who introduced me to Mr. Anderson, in charge of the American mission at Tsihombe, a remote Antandroy village near the coast, through which I should have to pass on my way to Tuléar, and where it would be necessary to stay the night.

Mr. Anderson, who was taking a few days' rest at Fort-Dauphin, told me there was no hotel at Tsihombe, but I was welcome to stay at the mission for as long as I liked—an offer I gladly accepted. The next day he drove me out into the country in order that I should see something of the Antanosy tribe living around the Fort-Dauphin district. I found them a primitive people, darker and more negroid in appearance than the Antaimoro, with woolly hair, flat noses, and thick lips, yet with a strong mixture of Malay and Arabic influence.

Ancestor worship and fear of malignant spirits seem to form the background of their religion, superstition and fear having such a hold that, Mr. Anderson said, these people were very hard to convert, being extremely conservative by nature. We passed several of their burial-places backed by a thickly wooded grove, a short distance from the road, and consisting of huge upright stones, decorated with the horns of cattle. It is customary for a man's entire herd to be sacrificed at his death, and some of the horns placed on and around the memorial stone. His friends and relatives have an orgy afterwards, feasting on the

meat for several weeks, as all of it must be consumed. The bodies are not, as a rule, buried beneath the stones, but in a dense thicket near by. This place is considered sacred, and as no one dares to approach it, the trees and undergrowth are never cut down.

I noticed, beneath one of the memorial stones plentifully adorned with cattle horns, the remains of some coins which had recently been burned to propitiate, so I was told, the dead person. So great is their fear of the deceased, that native parents belonging to these primitive southern tribes, in order that the spirits may think they have no love for their children, and for this reason will leave them unharmed, frequently call their unfortunate offspring by as ugly names as possible, such as "Pig Face" (the greatest insult they can think of), "Manure Heap," or "Mr. Bad Crocodile". Other tribes, again, give their children no name at all until after six or seven years, for fear of evil spirits becoming unduly interested. In the meantime, boys and girls alike are given the generic name of Kakay. The children are often left purposely with their noses unwiped, the mother believing that the more unpleasant the appearance of their little ones, the safer they would be from attack by the spirits.

These people live in constant dread and fear of their dead. An old woman, for instance, after having been despised and even ill-treated during her lifetime—the people having no affection for their aged relatives—becomes all-important the moment she dies. Memorial stones are erected in her honour, sacrifices burnt, everything is done to propitiate her spirit, which, free from the body, is believed to have grown malignant and may be a source of danger to those left behind.

When passing a village, just a few one-roomed dwellings made from the wood and thatched with the dried leaves of the Traveller's Tree, I noticed that one of the huts was unfinished, consisting only of the framework. Apparently it is the custom when building a new house to leave it uncompleted and unthatched for about a year, sometimes much longer, in the hope that any spirits who might be around and who may have noticed the making of a new home would forget about it during the interval and would not be there to haunt it when the owners finally took possession. This fear of the dead is the curse of the Malagasy religion. It continues to exist even among the more enlightened Hova and Betsileo tribes who have not been converted to Christianity, casting a shadow over their lives and sapping their self-confidence.

On the Sunday after my arrival at Fort-Dauphin I was invited by Mr. Anderson and three of the American women teachers to spend the day out at St. Luce, about thirty-five miles along the coast, where there is another mission station of the Norwegian Lutheran Church with American missionaries in charge. They called for me in Mr. Anderson's car at eight o'clock, and we started off in the cool of a beautiful morning. The drive was a lovely one, with fine views of the southern mountain range on our left, and on our right the sea, the intersecting country on both sides being covered with curious vegetation of all kinds. There were many Traveller's Trees and large bushes of a particular form of the curious "pitcher plant" (*Nepenthes Madagascariensis*) peculiar to Madagascar, of which I was able to collect some good specimens for the British Museum (Natural History), who had kindly provided me with a press in order that I might collect specimens for them of any plants of special interest. The pitcher plant, with its long vase-shaped flower at the head of a twisting stalk, is carnivorous, and contains a poisonous liquid which stupefies insects. It has a lid which remains closed until the plant matures, but which then opens to admit insects. These, unable to escape, are gradually absorbed by the plant. In all probability it was the discovery of the pitcher plant that gave rise to the far-fetched myth of the existence of the mysterious "Man-Eating Tree" of Madagascar! There were many other plants and wild flowers around Fort-Dauphin, some of great beauty, such as the white waxen orchid growing in the forked branches of trees. I succeeded in collecting a certain number of various specimens, including the *Mimosa Pudica*, a form of the sensitive plant, found only in this part of the island, the tiny outspread leaves of which curl up if touched, like a little hand.

About halfway to Santa Luce we came upon a remarkable collection of upright burial stones, with their decoration of numerous cattle horns. Behind the stones was a huge tree with outspreading branches, from which hung suspended a quantity of coloured rags. This was the place of sacrifice and of the performance of heathen rites of all kinds. A grassy track beyond led into thick undergrowth, and it was here that, in all probability, the bodies commemorated by the stones were buried. A sandy track, following the shore for the last part of the way, took us at last to the mission station and school at Santa Luce. The mission buildings face the sea and stand in a garden with a magnificent avenue of immensely tall coconut trees, leading

down to the shore. Over a hundred Malagasy girl boarders are being educated here. They are taught hygiene, domestic economy, and how best to look after their homes and children. The majority of the girls, whose ages range from twelve to twenty years of age, come from Christian families, but those from non-Christian homes are not refused.

Later I was taken to see the little Lutheran Church to which some of the people from the near-by native village come to worship, but not all here are Christians. The village is divided into two sections; the difference between the heathen section and the Christian is remarkable. Whereas the latter is comparatively clean, the former is filthy; the thatched huts are not raised from the dusty ground on posts, as is the usual custom, but stand flat on the level, becoming as a result infested with fleas and other insects. The reason for this changed form of building is that, long ago, the king of the tribe, being lame and unable to climb the steps to the doors of these houses, ordered that in future they should not be raised from the ground, but should stand on the level. Later some of the people became converted to Christianity, and the head man, who had himself adopted the new religion, ordered, as an example to the others, a new house and had it raised on short posts, in the usual way. Unfortunately, the steps to the entrance were forgotten, and on his first night in the hut he stepped out into the darkness, fell, and broke his thigh. This incident, to the superstitious, was regarded as an omen and a warning, and from that time onward the heathen section of the village have continued to insist that their dwellings should not be raised from the ground, in contrast to the Christian section, whose huts all stand on posts, in the usual way, and are much cleaner in consequence.

We had lunch in the pleasant cool of the mission superintendent's bungalow, after which we were advised to retire for the early-afternoon siesta religiously observed, I found, by all residents in Madagascar. I was quite glad of a rest myself in the cool of a bedroom lent me by one of the teachers. While lying down, I heard, through the open window, the strains of "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" being most beautifully sung in parts in Malagasy by some of the girls of the native school. Later, before we left, all the pupils lined up in front of us and sang two more hymns, one being an old native song, a hymn of praise for the arrival of the first missionaries in Madagascar, and for the benefits and blessings that have resulted from their work. And, indeed, the more I saw of the people and the

country, the more I realized the fine work done by the missionaries of all denominations in helping to free the people from the terrible domination of fear that, as a result of their heathen belief, rules their lives, making existence for many a misery and a torment. The wild and so-called savage Antandroy tribes of the south are especially responsive to the teaching of Christianity, for, being nomads by nature, they react quickly to new ideas. Mr. Anderson told me that his church had made many converts amongst them, and these were often keen to become trained evangelists themselves, for, having once become Christians and having been freed from the common dread of evil spirits, their lives are wonderfully changed, and they are eager to start native churches in their various districts, in order to spread the good news that "Zanahary" is not the aloof and terrible One they feared, but a God of Love. I learned that the missionaries in the Antandroy part of the country receive many pathetic messages from remote districts begging for an evangelist to be sent to teach them. The following is an example :

"We, at Ankilwilo, ask evangelist from you, O Father and Mother, for there are many children here who wish to learn. Come here, we beg. Send us a Teacher at once. So say your children at Ankilwilo."

Needless to say, evangelists are sent in response to these appeals whenever possible, but there are not nearly enough to cope with the masses of the primitive people of the south, many of whom are still forced to live in the darkness of their ignorance and superstition. Whatever may be one's private views on the advisability of Christian missions in other lands, there is no doubt at all as to their urgent need in Madagascar—the results speak for themselves.

Before driving back from St. Luce to Fort-Dauphin we took a walk along a lovely curving bay of white sand, with tropical vegetation, palms, and aloes of all kinds growing right down to the shore. At last we reached a reef of red rocks, jutting out into the sea, and from here we got a fine view of the coast-line, with its lovely green fringe of trees and shrubs backed by grand ranges of mountains. A high wind had sprung up, and the sea was magnificent: a wonderful Mediterranean blue with dazzling white foam-tipped breakers thundering in and breaking upon the smooth sandy beach. I longed to bathe, and would have done so had there been an opportunity.

The big plain, dotted with scrub and Traveller's Trees, between the sea and mountains at St. Luce and towards Fort-Dauphin is very malarial, owing to the existence of many swamps. As already mentioned, when the French first landed here in the seventeenth century they found it impossible to settle for any length of time, owing to the number who died of fever, and so they moved their quarters to Fort-Dauphin. The first missionaries down here at this southern point were also badly stricken, and would have found it impossible to remain had it not been for the successful efforts made later to cope with the mosquitoes around the mission district, which part is now comparatively healthy.

It clouded over about five o'clock, and we had some heavy tropical showers of rain before reaching home, an unusual event in Fort-Dauphin, which has on an average only twenty-seven wet days in a year, as compared with 180 at Tamatave on the east coast, where the rainfall is heavy. The present down-pour cleared the air and the following day was beautiful, with a cloudless sky. In the late afternoon I enjoyed a bathe, the first of many during my fortnight at Fort-Dauphin, in a sandy cove near the promontory of "Lebanon". There was a dangerous current, and so surf bathing only was possible, especially as there were many sharks further out.

I lay on the clean white sand while the foaming breakers splashed over me, and, although the water was lukewarm after the heat of the day, I felt much exhilarated, and as the sun set, throwing a rosy glow over the sea, I enjoyed hot tea from my thermos, and later walked back to the hotel bungalow by starlight.

## CHAPTER XII

### AMONG THE ANTANDROY TRIBES AT TSIHOMBE

THROUGH the kind help of the Chef de Region, a good and reliable car was found to take me from Fort-Dauphin for the long journey across the south of the island to Tulcar on the west coast. The driver, Rafalipo, an educated young man belonging to the Hova tribe, and a skilled mechanic, spoke excellent French and seemed very intelligent. He said that, as the road followed a very unfrequented and desolate part of the country, we should have to take many cans of petrol, and in addition a good supply of water, part of our route leading through a waterless desert dried up through lack of rainfall.

Before leaving, I spent a busy day packing up my belongings, pressing and labelling my plants, and paying farewell visits to my kind missionary friends. Mr. Anderson had already returned to Tsihombe, where I was to spend the first night or two with him and his wife at the mission station. Rafalipo called for me with the car in good time the next morning, and we were off by 8.30.

Soon we had crossed the high ridge of hills behind Fort-Dauphin, and were back in the weird forest country towards Ambovombe, the land of the fantsiholitra and the baobab, and the beautifully shady tamarind (Kily) tree, this last a striking contrast to the prickly and unfriendly fantsiholitra, and beloved of the natives, who hold their meetings beneath its cool shade whenever possible. The fantsiholitra and didiera trees were less stark than they seemed the last time I passed here, for the long attenuated branches were now bearing tiny fleshy leaves, giving them a bright green appearance against the sky instead of black, and softening slightly the effect of the strange landscape. In places, where there were patches of open ground, the forest was streaked with vivid colour from the flaming red flower of the lovely aloe (*vahombe*), now in full bloom and giving the landscape the illusion of being on fire, with its dense clusters of scarlet bushes against the grey-green background of cacti and scrub—a lovely sight in contrast to the deep blue of the sky.

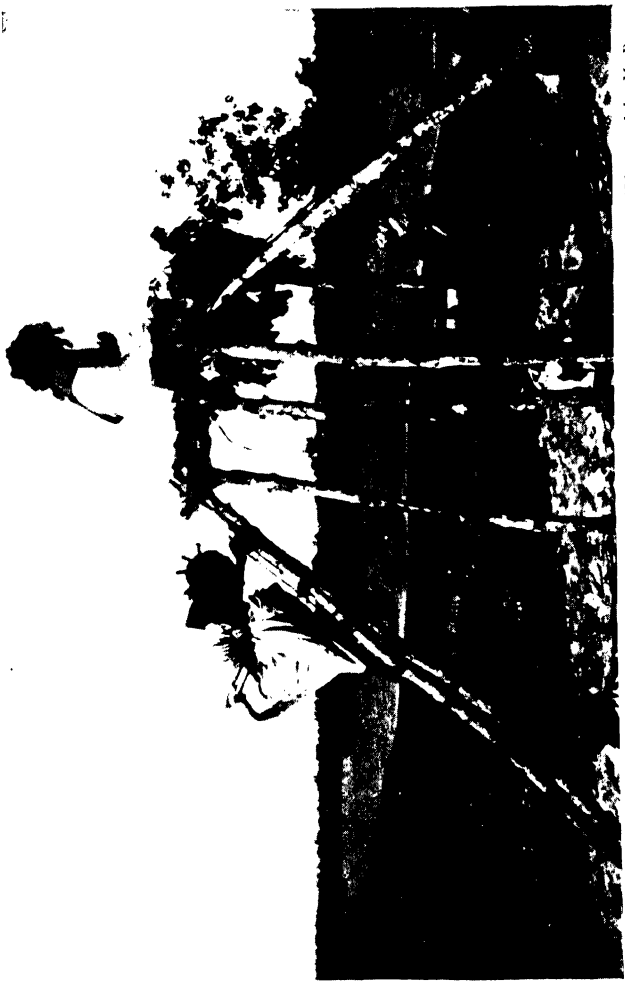
We reached Amboasary about mid-day, and after crossing the river by a ferry raft came once more to the little shack of Mr. Charles Groult. I had been unable to inform him of my arrival, and found he was just hurrying off by car to an appointment some miles away; but before leaving he most kindly arranged with his servant for lunch to be prepared in his bungalow and told one of his native boys to accompany me into the forest, where I might see some lemurs.

While I was having lunch, a high wind, hot and dry, suddenly sprang up; clouds of dust and sand filled the air, and it was necessary to close the door and windows of the bungalow. The squall died as quickly as it had come, and by the time I had reached the forest all was still again, with the scorching sun burning fiercely and making one long for the shade of the trees.

Leaving Rafalipo in charge of the car, I started off along a forest track with the native boy. I was struck by the extraordinary contrast of the scenery here to that of the forests near the east coast and up in the hills on the high plateau. In place of their green and luxuriant vegetation, here, owing to the



A MAHAFALY BURIAL PLACE (*see* p. 119)



(Photograph by M. Basset.)

CEREMONY OF THE KOBANY FILO (see p. 125)

scanty rainfall, all was parched and dried up, the growth consisting mainly, apart from the tall tamarind trees, of cacti and prickly plants of various kinds, aloes, and the didiera trees. Walking was difficult, and I was frequently scratched by the thorny spikes and undergrowth overspreading the narrow tracks. After a quarter of an hour we reached a thicket in which the boy declared a number of lemurs were usually to be found, but, much to my disappointment, there were none to be seen.

After waiting around for some time longer in the scorching heat I regretfully decided to rejoin the car, and we started to walk back by a different path. After a few minutes I chanced to look upwards, and there, asleep and crouching among the top branches of a tall tree, were three fine lemurs, snow-white, except for their pretty dark-brown heads. They were as large as apes, with immensely long tails, and when the boy roused them by throwing some sticks at the tree they started to spring from branch to branch, and finally leapt with lightning speed one after the other through the air on to the top of another tree. I was told afterwards that, when startled or disturbed, these lemurs can be very fierce, and might easily have attacked us. Fortunately I was unaware of this at the time, and enjoyed to the full the lovely sight of the graceful creatures swinging their way from tree to tree with amazing agility and calling to one another with curious shrill cries—a wailing that has been compared to the voices of children crying, and the sound of which echoed strangely through the silence of the forest long after they had vanished from sight.

In addition to these white lemurs, there are many other species found in the forests, of which the best known is the ring-tailed lemur, whose tail is striped with alternate bands of black and white, and which is said to live among rocks instead of in the tree-tops. Yet another is the tiny mouse lemur, of which there are several varieties ranging from only four to six or seven inches long. Like most of the others, they live in the tops of the highest trees, making nests for themselves of sticks padded with leaves, and sleep most of the day, only coming fully to life at night, unless disturbed.

Making one's way through these prickly forests is very trying, especially in the heat of the day, and I was not sorry to get back to the road and the car. The afternoon's drive took us through flat country, with great stretches of bush and occasional forest as far as eye could see. No dwellings or villages for miles, and we met no one on the road.

At last, a few miles from the most southerly point of the coast, Fort Cap St. Marie, we arrived at the village of Tsihombe, and I went straight to the bungalow of the Andersons at the American Lutheran Mission station. They gave me a warm welcome, but told me they were sorry their co-worker, a woman doctor who had lived here for many years longer than themselves, and who could have told me much of interest, was ill with malaria and, having had high fever for over a week, would be unable to meet me. She was to be taken to the healthier climate at Fort-Dauphin as soon as possible.

There is a little Lutheran Church at Tsihombe with a native pastor, who works in union with Mr. and Mrs. Anderson and the woman doctor. The day of my arrival was a Sunday, and after tea I accompanied Mr. Anderson to the church, where that evening there happened to be a verse-reciting and singing competition between groups of men and women from the surrounding villages. The Malagasy are very musical by nature, and the Antandroy in particular love singing, which comes naturally to them. I sat next to the native pastor, himself an Antandroy, and found he spoke excellent French. When he turned towards me I saw that his face was terribly scarred, and later I learned his history, which is a dramatic one.

Happening to be born on an unlucky day, it appeared that it would be his terrible fate to be killed by his parents immediately after birth, for his father and mother, being heathen, were under the power of the dreadful tribal law, which commanded in those days that all children born on a Thursday, or another unlucky day settled for them by the diviners consulted before the birth, must be put to death, otherwise terrible misfortune would befall the whole family. The usual method employed of killing the infants was to bury them alive beneath one of the countless huge ant-heaps found all over the countryside in the south, or to leave them to be trampled to death by cattle. On this occasion the missionary of the Norwegian Lutheran Church at Manafahy, when passing the entrance to a cattle bin one morning, was horrified to see a tiny baby boy lying in the way, just where the oxen were passing. Some of the animals had already entered the enclosure, and the child, who had been left to be trampled upon, had already a terrible wound in the head. Seizing the baby from under the very hooves of the oxen, the missionary rescued him just in time and took him to his own home. Wonderful to relate, the child recovered and lived to

grow up a Christian, receiving his education at the Mission school of his rescuer.

When he grew up the boy wished to become an evangelist among his own people. He was sent to a theological college, which he passed through so brilliantly that eventually he was ordained, and is now pastor of the church at Tsihombe, still bearing, however, the marks on his face from his terrible experience.

Owing to the vigilance of the French Government during the last fifty years, this horrible practice of child murder has practically ceased among the primitive tribes of Madagascar, severe punishment being meted out to those responsible; but, I was told by missionaries, in very remote districts it is impossible to detect always what is going on, and as long as the people remain heathen there is always the danger that these terrible acts may still occasionally be done in secret and never discovered.

The Antandroy number some hundreds of thousands, and are scattered far and wide over the wild and little-known country of the south. Ninety per cent of the people still remain out of contact with church and education of any kind, and only 2,000 children out of 100,000 attend school. For this vast district of the Antandroy there are at present roughly only about twelve Government schools, and the same number of Mission schools. Provided they have certificated teachers, the latter are allowed to take the place of the Government schools. The only contact with civilization obtained by the rest of the people and this applies merely to the men) is their compulsory work on the roads for the Government; every able-bodied man being obliged to work for ten days of the year at road-repairing, etc., as part of his tax, in addition to paying 68 francs, which money is collected by the native Administrator (Chef de Canton) of the district. A certain number of the natives are called up for compulsory military training, for which they are sent to France, but this does not apply to all.

On my first morning at Tsihombe, the District Administrator kindly accompanied me in the car out to Fort Cap St. Marie, the most southerly point of Madagascar, about twenty-five miles distant. We followed a wild and desolate road, with wide expanses of scrub and forest on either side, where again one saw the weird silhouette of the sinister fantsiholitra trees, their bare attenuated branches faintly veiled with green, pointing upwards.

Near the coast we stopped at Anovy, a heathen Antandroy village of the most primitive type. The people were living in

tiny one-roomed huts made from the wood of the *fantsiholitra* tree and thatched with straw. There were three separate entrances, two in front and one behind ; those in front being respectively for the man and his wives, and that behind for the children. These openings, the sides of which were decorated with carving, were so small that the family was forced to crawl inside on hands and knees. In the interior was the usual slab of hearth-stone on one side for the fire, and straw mats covered the ground. These huts, none of them raised on posts, were quite different in appearance from those of the Tanala people. It is only during the daytime that the family forgather ; at night the man sleeps alone, his wives retiring to an adjacent hut, and the children to another, still smaller and made mostly of straw, which they share with the grandmother, or some other old woman of the village ; for the old women are, as a rule, in these Antandroy villages made to sleep with the children in this tinier and more primitive type of hut.

I noticed that the faces of both men and women were tattooed, and they wore bead necklaces ; also both sexes had a somewhat similar form of hairdressing, which in the case of the women was most elaborate. The hair was dressed in numerous tiny plaits and arranged in separate tight round coils close against the head. When arranging their coiffeur, which is allowed to remain untouched for months, the women first plaster their head with the fat of oxen, in order to prevent dryness and preserve the skin. They also rub grease on their arms and necks to keep the flesh supple ; but, as may be imagined, and as I noticed for myself, the odour of the rancid fat, especially that on the hair, is most unpleasant !

Before I left, the women and children were persuaded by the headman, an imposing individual wearing nothing but a loin-cloth and carrying a javelin (for all the men here carry spears), to perform a dance for me. They were far less timid than those of the Tanala tribe and made no objection when I took some cinematograph pictures.

Among the women was the strange sight of a pure albino. The upper part of her body was uncovered. She was very fat, and, with her white skin burnt brick red by the sun, her woolly fair hair, pale eyes, and negroid features, was most curious to see. I learned that she was married and was looked up to by the rest of the village as being someone rather specially favoured.

After leaving these people we drove on until the road ended by the sand dunes near Fort Cap St. Marie. Here was a big

well, recently sunk by the French after they had discovered a spring of fresh water under the ground. This well has come as a godsend to the people of Anovy and adjacent villages, who formerly had to walk the twenty-five miles to Tsihombe for drinking-water, which they collected in big water-bottles of hide carried on their heads. The new well has sufficient water for 5,000 men and 10,000 cattle, and has practically eliminated the danger of famine so common in the past around this waterless part of the country.

Between the sand dunes and the great breakers of the Indian Ocean thundering in upon the smooth beach was a coral reef with a calm and narrow lagoon. There would be no danger of sharks here, and I longed for a bathe ; but in the scorching heat of the midday sun I realized that the danger of sunstroke would be too great, much as I was tempted by the cooling water.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THROUGH THE MAHAFALY DISTRICT TO THE WEST COAST

EARLY the following morning, the car having been well overhauled by Rafalipo, I left Tsihombe for the village of Ampanihy, over 100 miles away towards the west coast in the country of the Mahafaly tribe. We were careful to take a good supply of water, because we should be driving for many miles over a waterless desert, where a breakdown would be serious. In the past this land was covered with cacti, nature's wonderful provision for the people, providing them with emergency food and drink ; for, during a drought, when the rivers were completely dried up and water absolutely nil, making it impossible to grow corn for their cattle or maize for themselves, the natives lived on the cacti, finding just enough collected moisture in the plants to keep themselves and their cattle alive.

In recent years, however, nearly all the cactus bushes have been destroyed by the cochineal insect, which, since the French occupation, somehow or other got introduced into the country, and the plight of the people and their herds during famine years has been pitiable, hundreds dying. Monsieur Decary, of the French Government at Tananarive, told me that he had been instrumental in replanting 20,000 cacti of a new variety without thorns, to replace those destroyed, and which the insects would not touch ; and in time it is hoped the people will once more have the plants to fall back upon in times of need. Indeed, already

the shrubs are beginning to thrive, for at every village, adjoining its little collection of wooden dwellings, I noticed a cacti plantation, some of considerable size.

Soon after leaving Tsihombe we passed a big Antandroy family tomb, oblong in shape, the top covered with stones and quantities of cattle horns. The road now led over vast tracks of uninhabited country, burnt yellow by blazing sun and densely overgrown with thorny shrubs of all kinds. Here and there welcome shade was provided by giant baobab trees, and once we passed through a small parched forest with many didiera trees, but for the most part one saw merely low shrubs, with a pretty mauvish pink flower, similar to the cistus, and the scarlet-flowering aloe, the latter giving occasional vivid colour to an otherwise somewhat monotonous landscape.

At length we came to a river, the water fortunately shallow enough for the car to pass through. These rivers in this part of the forest are unbridged, and as the country is too deserted to make a ferry worth while, the road is open only in very dry weather. Had there been a heavy fall of tropical rain, such as occasionally happens at this time of year, I should have been unable to continue the journey to Tuléar and would have had to return to Fort-Dauphin. Fortune favoured me, however, and we continued to make good progress.

We were now in the country of the reputed savage Mahafaly tribe. These people own large herds of cattle. Here and there one would pass a number of fine oxen, shepherded by tribesmen who, instead of crooks, carried javelins, for no Mahafaly ventures forth without his warlike spear, more especially the nomad herds-men. Like the Antandroy, the Mahafaly depend entirely on their cattle for their livelihood, some of them owning enormous herds. The men of the tribe seldom wear more than a loin-cloth and adopt a peculiar form of hairdressing, different from the Antandroy and other tribes. The front of the hair is parted in the middle and is divided into a number of tiny plaits, which are made to hang down over the forehead, the back portion standing up on end in a short woolly frizz.

In appearance these people are a mixture of a very dark negroid type and one much fairer. This may be accounted for by the fact that at the time of an attempted Dutch invasion in the past a number of Dutchmen were captured on the west coast and taken inland, where they intermarried with the native women of the district, the result being that certain of the present-day Mahafaly have light-coloured skins, noses less squat than

their neighbours, and comparatively straight instead of frizzy hair.

Meeting a small group of Mahafaly tribesmen by the wayside, the first I had seen of these people, I wanted to take a photograph, but was dissuaded by Rafalipo.

"No, no!" he said in French. "These people are probably bandits. If we stop they will kill us!"

I laughed, feeling sure he was wrong, for the Mahafaly are not dangerous robbers. It is true they are fond of stealing, but they are more cattle thieves than anything else and seldom commit murder. However, as Rafalipo seemed so nervous, I agreed that it might be wiser to wait until near a village before attempting to make their acquaintance!

Shortly before arriving at Ampanihy we passed a remarkable burial-place quite different from any I had seen. The Mahafaly bury their dead, like the Antandroy, in family tombs beneath large piles of stones adorned with cattle horns; but with a striking difference, for, in addition to the horns, the tombs are decorated with totems—tall, carved wooden poles, some depicting human figures or birds. These totems are found only in this particular corner of Madagascar, and are peculiar to the Mahafaly tribe. I thought of taking a photograph, but Rafalipo assured me that I would find other and even more interesting examples later.

The countryside became more wooded as we neared Ampanihy, and we reached the village about mid-day. Here I found a clean little inn, where I was able to put up for the night. The French proprietor, who had lived in the place for twenty years, proved most informative. In the afternoon he took me to see an interesting Mahafaly tomb hidden some miles away in the heart of the forest, and reached by a rough track along which, he thought, we could take the car for the greater part of the way.

He took with him one of his servants, who knew the locality of the tomb and would be able to guide us to the place. This man was a convict and was serving the latter part of his sentence apprenticed out as one of the hotel servants. A Mahafaly tribesman of the district, he had been present twenty-five years before at the funeral of the late king of the tribe, whose remarkable tomb, even larger than the one I was soon to see, is to be found between twenty and thirty miles distant, very much hidden away in an unfrequented part of the forest. Owing to the difficult approach, it would have been impossible for me to get there and back before dark, and so I was unable to visit it. My

companion, who had seen this tomb for himself, told me it contained extraordinary figures of carved wood, some so obscene that reproduction by photograph would hardly be possible. In addition to the figures were hundreds of cattle horns, for this wicked old king, who died in 1923, had ordered a hundred of his herd to be sacrificed at his death, together with ten of his unfortunate servants. These men were virtually slaves, for although slavery officially ceased in Madagascar with the advent of the French Government, it persisted for some while longer in very out-of-the-way districts.

The man with us, who had witnessed the funeral celebrations, described how he had seen nine of the slaves buried alive, with gold, drinking vessels, and cooking utensils—all of which, together with the sacrificed cattle and slaves, the king believed would accompany him into the next life. The tenth slave managed to escape and was known to the hotel proprietor, who told me the man was living in Mahafaly up to 1938, when he died. The hotel-keeper added that he had had the account of this man's fortunate escape from his own lips.

I confess to having been somewhat sceptical of the story at first, as I understood that nothing of the sort had happened since the French Occupation fifty years ago, the people fearing detection and punishment.

I was told afterwards, however, by a French official that the facts were in all probability quite true, for even as recently as twenty-five years ago it would have been impossible to know what was going on in the very remote and savage country of the south-west of the island, parts of which even today are still very little known, and where it is difficult always to keep in touch with what happens in the outlying districts.

We found the nearer tomb quite easily, although it was necessary to walk the last part of the way through rather dense and prickly scrub. The burial-place, a very large one, was covered with a great oblong pile of stones, plentifully adorned with cattle horns, and in their midst a number of tall, elaborately carved wooden posts surmounted by quaint figures, some depicting men and women and others birds and animals, reminiscent, like the others I had seen on the road, of the totems of Mexico. I was amused to notice that one of the male figures represented a French soldier in uniform reading a newspaper! In all probability the artist had intended it as a portrait of General Gallieni, first Governor-General of Madagascar!

The inn proprietor told me that owing to the large number of

horns decorating this tomb, it must either have been that of a rich cattle-owner or else a family burial-place—more likely the latter.

Leaving here, he took me to see the present "king" of the tribe, a ferocious-looking old man living in a native village not far off. He was standing, spear in hand, outside his thatched hut, and on my arrival gave me the native salute with hand upraised in manner so much like a Nazi that I almost expected him to say, "*Heil Hitler!*" He shook hands with me, a custom always followed by the kings and princes of the different tribes, who expect Europeans to respond. I was told that this man, during a recent violent quarrel, had kicked his brother so savagely that the latter never recovered, and died soon after. What was worse, years ago he had tried to kill his baby son, born on the unlucky day of a Thursday. Taking the child outside the village, he placed it on the ground with its head beneath an ant-heap. Mercifully, a Christian of the Hova tribe in Ampanihy, having expected what would happen, was on the watch, and as soon as the king's back was turned, rushed forward and rescued the baby, still unharmed, and leaving him later in charge of the missionaries. The child, educated at the mission school, is now nearly grown up. Needless to say, he has nothing to do with his father. The king has other younger sons, one of whom I saw—a delicate-looking youth with a form of wasting disease in his legs, far inferior in physique, I was told, to the cast-off elder brother.

Like the Tanala forest tribes, the Mahafaly are very fond of dancing, and that evening several professional male dancers performed near the hotel for my benefit, and also no doubt in hope of the few francs usually given to them on these occasions.

I set off for the final stage of my long drive to Tuléar at 6.45 the next day in the cool of the early morning, after first spending a few minutes in the Roman Catholic church, a fine building, belonging to the French Mission in Ampanihy. The interior was very well cared for and surprisingly large for so small a place. After leaving Ampanihy and crossing a more or less dried-up river-bed the road continued over further waterless desert country, with sandy soil and little vegetation other than aloes and the strange trees of the south. The "bottle" tree (baobab), with its long, queer, cigar-shaped trunk crowned by thickly spreading branches, seemed to flourish here, and one occasionally came across some lovely tamarind trees casting their delicious shade over the parched ground.

We passed several groups of natives, both men and women, with large skin water-bottles carried on their heads. They were either coming to or returning from the nearest well, from which sometimes they have to carry water for many miles. Many of these people can only do the journey twice a week, and they have trained themselves to do with the minimum amount of water, drinking only on alternate days, and never washing during a drought.

While stopping to take a photograph, for which I had to walk through the prickly bush, I remembered having been told that great care was needed in traversing the native paths in the forest country of the Mahafaly, for in the event of the flesh being scratched by the thorny scrub, a painful skin disease, easily contracted by Europeans and called *Plaies Malgaches* (Malagasy wounds) may result.

Another danger is that which comes from the raiketa plant, a species of prickly pear, the minute hairs of which become detached from the ripened fruit and are sometimes carried along by the wind. Should these tiny hairs enter the eye, a terrible irritation accompanied by partial blindness usually results. One may often see the raiketa planted as a stockade around the outskirts of a Mahafaly village, for the people know that the pain and itching which ensue from even the slightest contact with this dangerous cactus will form a sure and formidable protection from robbers.

The road continued through more or less monotonous desert and seemed quite deserted, for beyond occasional natives we met no one the whole way. The car gave no trouble, and to pass the time I drove it myself for eighty miles or so, until we came to the village of Betioky, after which the scenery was enlivened by a distant view of hills on the horizon.

About this time we met two other cars, the only ones in three days. They both stopped to exchange greetings with me. It is such an event to meet another traveller on this lonely road that cars seldom pass each other without stopping for a moment. The first of these cars was occupied by a German naturalist, who told me he was on an expedition to study the flora of the country; the other was driven by a native merchant on his way to Fort-Dauphin. Both men seemed rather surprised to find an Englishwoman on this part of the island, and gave me their good wishes for a safe arrival at Tuléar.

After another hour or so we came to the great river of the Oulany near Tongobory, which we had to cross by ferry. This

river is swift in places and full of large crocodiles, although I did not have the good fortune to see them. After the ferrymen, all of whom belonged to the Mahafaly tribe, had ferried us across with the car, we stopped at a village on the river-bank for an hour's rest. There was a Government Rest Hut here which the head man of the village opened for me after producing a table and chair.

After making myself tea and enjoying a couple of eggs, which I boiled and ate with vita-weat bread from my provision-box; I felt much refreshed, but glad all the same that the long three-days' drive was nearing its end, for by the time we reached Tuléar we should have covered approximately six hundred miles, having gone out of our way for considerable distances en route when at Tsihombe and Mahafaly.

During the afternoon the scenery completely changed and became very beautiful, the road following above the river with luxuriant forest, green and lovely, sloping upwards to the right of the road. Here were many varieties of beautiful and strange trees that included the baobab, tamarind, mango, and lovely fan-palm. The road passed through these woods, twisting and turning alongside the river nearly all the way to Tuléar, which we reached about four o'clock.

I was feeling very hot, tired, and dusty and longing for a wash and rest in the cool of the hotel, to which I had telegraphed from Fort-Dauphin for a room. To my dismay, the wire had not arrived, and I was told there was no accommodation for me, as a steamboat was shortly sailing from the port of Tuléar and there were more people than usual in the town. The only thing to do was to explain my plight to the Chef de Région. I found him at length in his office. He was most kind, and after having read my Government letters of introduction he promised to do all he could for my comfort, and arranged for me to have a nice room in a house set apart for Government guests ten minutes from the hotel, to which place I could go for meals, inviting me, however, to lunch with his wife and himself whenever I wished, and in any case on the morrow.

My room had the luxury of a bathroom adjoining. No water laid on, of course, but the servant in charge soon lit a big wood fire below, on which he boiled a cauldron of water for me, so that for the first time since leaving Fianarantsoa I enjoyed the luxury of a hot bath!

## CHAPTER XIV

## AT TULĒAR, AND THE CEREMONY OF THE KOBANY BILO

AT TulĒar, with its shops, bank, well-laid road planted with trees, and its crowded cafés, I found myself once more back in civilization, among a strangely cosmopolitan population: a mingling of French, Greeks, Arabs, Indians, and Malagasy. The proportion of Indians was surprisingly large, and the gaily coloured saris of the veiled women mingled with the white lambas of the Malagasy. Now and then, among the Indians, one saw women of high caste completely veiled, the purdah system being observed with such strictness that some of these women seldom leave the seclusion of their homes. The two mosques I saw in the town and the vivid colours in the bazaars added to the Eastern atmosphere of TulĒar.

Compared with Fort-Dauphin, the surrounding scenery was flat and uninteresting, and the very wide stretch of sand made the sea appear far off. The climate was extremely hot and enervating, and, owing to the prevalence of mosquitoes, very malarial.

A few miles outside the town there is a large ostrich farm, where an attempt is being made to breed ostriches, a number of which birds have been imported from Africa as an experiment. I was motored out to the farm one day by Monsier and Madame Leroy (the District Administrator and his wife), whose kind hospitality during my week in TulĒar I much appreciated.

On inquiring of Monsieur Leroy whether he thought it would be possible to colonize impecunious Jews in Madagascar, a question I had often heard asked in England, he replied, "No," there was no place for white people in the island unless they had money. Madagascar was not a white man's country. It was impossible for a white man to work on the land owing to the climate, which was unsuitable for hard labour of any kind. If a settler had the funds to pay native workmen, well and good; but without money behind him he could never make sufficient to live on.

Apart from the traders and merchants in the bazaars of TulĒar, the Malagasy of the district belong to the Sakalava tribe, those along the coast being fisher-folk, and going by the name of Vezo-Sakalava. The men are intrepid sailors and live by fishing and transporting merchandise in long outrigger canoes, or roughly built sailing-boats, in which they often make long voyages of a thousand miles from one end of the island to the other.

Like all the other tribes, the heathen section of the Vezo-Sakalava are very superstitious, and live in fear of evil spirits, while witchcraft and sorcery are widely practised.

Among their curious ceremonies is the hysterical Kobany Bilo, for healing the sick. During my stay in Fianarantsoa, Monsieur Basset had told me he had witnessed the ceremony some years ago, when living near Tulĕar and working on a forest plantation. He was able to give me a detailed description of what he had seen, together with photographs he had taken, the only ones in existence of this very peculiar ceremony. He told me how a woman of between fifty and sixty, known to him in a Vezo village, had been severely ill for some time. He tried to help her by supplying medicine, but in vain. At last, all attempted cures by her friends having failed, the witch doctor was called in and, according to his instructions, the sick woman's grand-daughter, a young and healthy girl, was summoned and volunteered to take the sickness temporarily upon herself. According to the usual custom, the girl—in this case a child of about twelve or thirteen years of age—lay beside the sick woman for several days, while the villagers, led by the witch doctor, beat tom-toms around their hut, dancing and chanting continuously, until at last both women passed into a state of semi-conscious hysteria. As if mesmerized, they arose under the command of the witch doctor and, followed in procession by all the people beating tom-toms, they danced to the place of the Kobany Bilo, a high platform with a ladder set up outside the village at a spot marked off as sacred. Two effigies, carved from wood by the witch doctor and supposed to represent the sick woman and her substitute, were set up alongside the platform and surrounded by the sacred spears of the village. The crudely formed faces of the effigies had been painted with white plaster, according to the type of illness diagnosed by the doctor, who, on the arrival of the procession, was seen to be praying at the foot of the Kobany Bilo platform.

Still swaying to the rhythm of the tom-toms, the sick woman and her grand-daughter sat down at the foot of the platform, while two women assistants painted their faces with the same white plaster as that smeared upon the effigies. The woman and girl were then robed in clean white lambas, their heads anointed with grease, and their hair dressed in a special manner, and made to stick up on end in a series of tiny narrow tight plaits. The witch doctor, meanwhile, had been cooking rice on a newly lit fire and offering it to the special god he had invoked. He

also made an offering to the god of a very strong native alcohol obtained from honey, and placed in a big pot. After drinking a quantity himself, a liberal amount was consumed by the sick woman, her substitute, and the two assistants, all of whom quickly reached a state of intoxication. Jumping to their feet, the sick woman and her grand-daughter, both in an advanced state of hysterical emotion, began to dance round and round the platform.

Faster and faster they whirled, following the rhythm of the tom-toms and the persistent clapping of the witch doctor's hands. The wild dance was kept up for a considerable time, until at last, just as the sick woman was about to collapse, the witch doctor signalled her to stop and mount the platform. The young girl had already climbed up the steps and was seated at the top, apparently engaged in prayer. The sick woman, completely dazed, swayed towards the ladder, up and down the steps of which she danced several times before sinking down at last, completely exhausted, upon the platform by the side of the young girl at the bidding of the witch doctor. By this time the child had also collapsed, and she and the sick woman lay huddled together, both having become unconscious, while the crowd gradually dispersed and returned to the village, leaving the pair on the platform.

In these cases, should a cure have been effected, the sick person would recover consciousness some hours later, and return to the village, completely cured and showing no signs of exhaustion. The substitute, on the other hand, would remain lying on the platform for many hours, feeling very ill in her turn, the sickness having passed from the other woman to her, the effect of this transfer taking some time to wear off, although in the end she would be none the worse. In the case of failure the sick person would die on the platform, and the substitute, aware that she would be accused of not doing her part in helping towards the success of the treatment, would return weeping and terrified to the village, where she would be cursed by the witch doctor.

In this particular case witnessed by Monsieur Basset, the sick woman, on recovering consciousness, appeared, to his amazement, perfectly well and quite normal, whereas the young girl had taken on all the symptoms of the ailment. Her illness lasted for twenty-four hours, after which it passed off, and the child appeared to be quite herself again, and was seen the next morning by Monsieur Basset playing about with her friends as usual.

This Bilo, or hysterical dance for the healing of the sick, exists among other Malagasy tribes in different guises, but

whether this particular form, culminating with the mounting of the platform, may still be seen, I was unable to find out. With the spreading of European influence and the work of the missionaries along the coast, it may possibly have ceased to a great extent, if not altogether.

Owing to the intense heat along the east coast, the people of the Vezo tribe, living in villages far from Government control, and where there is no doctor, are in the habit of burying their dead within three hours of their passing. The bodies, dressed in lambas, are sewn into a mat left open at either end, and are buried in the sand in very shallow graves, only two and a half feet or even less from the surface. Occasionally the "dead" person has merely been in a state of coma, and his speedy burial has resulted in his being buried alive. When this happens, he occasionally recovers consciousness a moment or so after burial and if he is lucky enough to have the strength to push his way out of the sand in time, he emerges none the worse and returns to his home, knocking on the door of his relations' hut. Instead of receiving a joyful welcome, however, the unfortunate man is shunned by all, for his friends, thinking him to be a materialized ghost, refuse to have him in the house with them, even in the case of a near relative, such as a husband or wife. The ill-fated person becomes what is known as a *Vokatsky*, meaning "one who has returned to life from death", the literal translation being "coming from the ground". No longer may he work in his own Sakalava village or district, for he is forbidden to return there and ordered instead to live outside. Food is always brought to him regularly, but it is taken to some far-away and deserted spot to which he must go in order to get it.

Monsieur Basset told me that he had himself met one of these poor outcasts. The man was living in the forest all alone and was very miserable. Being asked why he did not go to another part of Madagascar where he was unknown and would be able to start life anew, he replied that he would then be even more unhappy, for he would feel too strange; here, at least, he explained, he had the forest and the familiar home surroundings which he knew and loved. If he left them he would die, for they were all he had.

## CHAPTER XV

### BACK TO THE HIGH PLATEAU

THE weekly mail and passenger bus was due to leave Tuléar for the long three-days' journey to Antsirabe early in July. This

would enable me to reach Tananarive by rail from Antsirabe in time for France's National Day, July 14.

Beyond the drive out to the ostrich farm and one or two visits to the bazaars and native quarter I had been able to do little during my few days at Tul'ar, owing to the intense heat, combined with a certain amount of inevitable fatigue, resulting from the 650 miles of difficult motoring from Fort-Dauphin.

On the morning of my departure I got up by candlelight at four o'clock, for the bus left Tul'ar at 5 a.m. and to get a seat it was necessary as usual to be on the spot at the time of the car's arrival. The Residency servant in charge of the guest-house where I stayed obtained a couple of rickshaws for me and my baggage, and I drove by starlight through the, as yet, silent and empty thoroughfares to the bus station, near the outskirts of the town. The usual crowd of natives, with their bundles and straw baskets, were waiting by the roadside, and again I found myself the only European.

On the arrival of the bus I was fortunate in securing a corner seat near the front, and when we started off, before dawn, the air was pleasantly cool. Fortunately, I had some biscuits with me, for we did not reach our first halt, a village where we obtained coffee, until 10.30, owing to a faulty tyre necessitating long delays. On the way the native driver, with one hand on the steering-wheel, continually turned round and hung his head anxiously out of the window to see if the second bus, "the camion", with the mail and heavy luggage was in sight. Apparently its driver was rather slow, being unused to the road; our own man, on the other hand, although he drove at an almost terrifying speed, was amazingly skilful.

The road, leading at first over parched and deserted plains, was very narrow in places; there were frequent gullies or dried-up river beds, which had to be crossed by means of primitive bridges composed of wooden boards or merely tree-trunks laid closely together and secured by bands of strang creeper. There were no side barriers, of course, to these makeshift bridges, which were sometimes so narrow that there was only just room for our large and heavy car. Before crossing, the driver usually accelerated, taking them at a great speed, the reason being that, had we stopped or gone too slowly, there would have been a danger of the bridges collapsing! Indeed, I heard of a case in which this had actually happened, although luckily just after the passing over of the car.

For the greater part of the day we followed a monotonous

expanse of desert scenery. Bare, flat, and uninteresting compared with other districts, although enlivened in one place by groves of giant coconut palms, with a far distant view ahead of the mountains of the high plateau. The heat at mid-day and during the afternoon was great, and it was a relief when, towards sunset, we reached the hills towards Ihosy.

As we wound up and down rocky passes with sharp hairpin bends, and on to the delta at Ihosy, the climate underwent a sudden change, becoming much cooler, with a high wind. I had a pleasant welcome from the cheery French proprietor of the little hotel at Ihosy, and after some supper—an omelette, coffee, biscuits, and cheese—I wrote up my diary and went to bed as soon as possible, the proprietor promising to have me called at four o'clock next morning for the usual start, before dawn.

It was raining and very cool when, after a cup of tea brought me by the house-boy, I dressed by the dim light of a single candle, and with the help of my electric torch found my way to the bus station in a yard a few minutes' walk from the hotel. The car was due to start at five o'clock, and we were told that, if we had no breakdown en route, we should reach Fianarantsoa about 3.30 in the afternoon.

As we struck up into the hills it became very cold, an extraordinary contrast to the intense heat of the day before, when leaving Tulior and the west coast. There were frequent showers, and when, shortly before four o'clock, we reached Fianarantsoa the rain was coming down heavily and the mountains were veiled in thick mist.

The proprietor of the hotel and his wife were glad to see me back safely and interested to hear of my adventures. A happy hour was spent in reading my long-looked-for mail from home, a large packet of which was awaiting my arrival; afterwards I found time to have my hair shampooed at a local hairdresser's, a necessary proceeding, as, during my long journeys by road across the deserts, I had been constantly covered by clouds of fine red dust from the sandy soil.

I dined with Dr. and Mrs. Helland of the American Mission, who also seemed very glad to see me back, and were most interested to hear news of their colleagues at the mission stations in Fort-Dauphin and Tsihombe. In spite of a roaring log fire, I found myself shivering with cold, and could hardly believe that only two days before I had been living in a tropical heat so intense that at mid-day it was almost impossible to keep cool.

The Hellands had a wireless set, and so I was able to hear

from them the latest news of the European situation. I gathered the tension was increasing, and congratulated myself on the fact that I had been able to secure a berth in the *Grandidier*, sailing at the end of the month. The idea of being cut off from Britain should she be at war was intolerable, and I was impatient now to get home.

Only a few hours of sleep that night, then up again at four o'clock the next morning in time to start for Ambositra and Antsirabe. The rain was still coming down in sheets, and a piercing cold wind made it necessary for me to pile on all my warmest winter clothes and turn up the collar of my waterproof. The month of July is mid-winter in the tropics, and up here on the high plateau, at an altitude of 6,000 feet, the season was at its coldest, and one felt the contrast to the totally different climate of the south and west coasts very keenly. My fingers were numb when, at mid-day, we stopped for an hour's halt for lunch at Ambositra.

Miss Hanning and her brother (the British couple from Mauritius), whom I had met here when on my way south, had made me promise to let them know when I should be passing through Ambositra again on my return, as they hoped I would lunch with them. Accordingly I had sent Miss Hanning a line from Fort-Dauphin giving an approximate date, and it was with much pleasure that I saw her looking out for me among the passengers as the bus drew up at the stopping-place.

Observing how cold I was, she hurried me to her bungalow, where in the warmth of a cheerful blazing log fire I gradually thawed and, after a hot lunch and delicious coffee, felt much better and more ready to continue the drive to Antsirabe.

Miss Hanning and her brother were much interested in hearing of my travels. Having lived the greater part of their lives in Ambositra, they remembered the time, long before the existence of road and mail cars, when all journeys in Madagascar were made by filanzana, and there was no railway up from the east coast to Tananarive—the journey by carrying-chair in those days taking the best part of a week.

After lunch I had a few minutes before the bus started in which to look at a collection of beautifully carved boxes, chests, and other objects, together with decorated bowls—the work of the Tanala forest tribes, many of whom have a natural gift for woodcarving, and invent their own beautiful and sometimes complicated designs. The objects were displayed in a shop specially devoted to the arts and crafts produced by the Tanala,

and had I had more luggage space I would have been glad to bring back a specimen of these people's work, but as I was travelling as light as possible I had been obliged all along to resist the temptation of adding to my baggage more than was absolutely necessary. A feeling for artistic expression is inherent in most sections of the Malagasy and is particularly marked among the Hova tribe, whose fine work may be seen at the Atelier—the Government School for Arts and Crafts—at Tananarive. When, on my return there, I visited this school I was much struck by the variety of objects displayed, among which there were beautiful hand-woven string carpets and rugs, raffia bags and hats; and most striking of all, exquisitely carved scenes from Malagasy life carved out of buffalo horns, and highly polished.

Leaving Ambositra, I regretted having had no time to see the Mother Superior and the kind Sisters of the Benedictine Convent, but I left messages for them with Miss Hanning.

Towards Antsirabe we came once more to the mimosa, great trees of it on either side of the road in full bloom and dripping gold over the roadside. Unfortunately, much of the beauty was hidden by the mist and rain, but nevertheless the sight of the masses of golden colour against the background of grey-green foliage and warm red soil was a lovely one. By the time we reached Antsirabe at four o'clock the rain had stopped and the weather showed signs of clearing.

After a violent quarrel between two sets of native porters as to who should collect my baggage from off the top of the camion it was finally seized by both parties and piled on to a rickshaw, while I secured another for myself to take me to the Terminus Hotel. My rickshaw went by the cheery name of "*La Bonheur*" (Good luck), and, indeed, it well represented my happy and thankful feelings at the moment; happy because I had succeeded in spite of difficulties in carrying through all I had set myself out to do during the last few months, and thankful because I had survived my various adventures safely and without sickness of any kind. I went early to bed, partly for the sake of warmth, for the hotel, with its stone floors, draughty corridors, and large french windows is not at its best in the cold-weather season.

Seven o'clock the next morning found me packed into the crowded little train for Tananarive, where I arrived about mid-day, happy to see on the platform the tall, familiar figure of Bishop O'Ferrall waiting to meet me and drive me back once more to the Anglican Mission.

## CHAPTER XVI

## AT TANANARIVE FOR THE JULY 14 CELEBRATIONS

THERE now followed a very full week of packing up, seeing friends, taking photographs of the native market, and writing up my notes. A time which culminated for me in the Celebrations of France's National Day on July 14, when I attended the Military Review by the officer then in command of the French Army in Madagascar, General Roucaud, and the annual evening reception at Government House, to which I had been invited. In addition, I had the pleasure of a farewell dinner most kindly given for me a few days later by the General and his wife.

The temporary break in the weather was over, and the morning of July 14 proved fine, with brilliant sunshine and an exhilarating tang in the air. In company with the Bishop and Mrs. O'Ferrall and their little daughter, I drove to the parade ground, where the Malagasy troops were to pass before the Governor-General. Monsieur Cayla having left Madagascar to take up another appointment and his successor not yet having arrived, the salute was taken by the Secretary-General, acting as Deputy-Governor. We were given splendid seats in the Government stand, where the plumed hats and gold-braided dress uniforms of the French officials afforded gay splashes of colour, adding a festive touch to the scene.

The review of the native troops included, apart from detachments of cavalry and infantry, a squad of pedal cyclists and some escorting aeroplanes. The troops, recruited from tribesmen all over the island, marched well, under the command of French officers, and were watched by a huge crowd of Malagasy citizens, who had come from far and wide, and were lined up many rows deep around the parade ground, their lambas a dazzling expanse of white in the brilliant sunshine. The march past was followed by an effective gymnastic display, in which several hundred native boys from the French Government school in Tananarive took part. The boys, nearly all belonging to the Hova tribe, were smart and of good physique, and the manner of their drill compared favourably with that of European schoolboys.

Driving back up the steep cobbled streets to the Bishop's house through the crowded city, with its 100,000 inhabitants, one was struck anew by the mixture of East and West in Tananarive. On the one side, the imposing Government buildings, the many churches of various denominations, the large general

post office, railway station, and the numerous shops, where the familiar names of "*Magasin Lafayette*," "*Magasin au Printemps*", and the fashionable hat shops, jewellers and stationers, with newspaper boys calling out latest editions, the cycles and taxi-cabs, made one feel this could be none other than a modern French town, until the illusion was dispelled by the appearance of rickshaws or slow-moving bullock-carts, and the sight, only just round the corner near to the railway station, of the native quarter and the great market with its open stalls, their vendors squatting on the ground under huge sun umbrellas, while all around hundreds of lambas showed up dazzling white against the dark-skinned faces and legs of the people as their wearers jostled their way through the crowd.

The National Day ended with the big annual reception and dance at Government House, to which I had the pleasure of going. The gardens around the Residency were illuminated by Chinese lanterns and coloured fairy lights, and when we arrived the big reception room was already crowded with a representative gathering of the French Colony in Madagascar, together with a large number of Malagasy who had gained their French citizenship and who had received invitations to be present. The atmosphere was cheerful and friendly, with a complete absence of formality.

The guests were received by the Deputy-Governor and his wife, herself a Malagasy, and for the time being enjoying the privileged position of the first lady in the land! I understood that her marriage with the Secretary-General when a beautiful young girl had naturally caused much comment at the time, and in spite of the absence of the colour bar there was a feeling of prejudice when she took her place with her husband at Government House.

Madam X, as I will call her, appears, however, to be a woman of keen intellect and much personal charm, and her first party, given soon after taking up residence, was such a success that barriers broke down and she won all hearts. When introduced to her, I found Madam X easy to talk to, with charming manners and perfect self-possession. She spoke excellent French and wore a smart Paris frock.

Among the natives the educated Malagasy woman has, in family life, considerable influence, and her opinion and advice on matters of business are listened to with respect.

The late Dr. Sibree, in his *Fifty Years in Madagascar*, published in 1923, puts this down to the fact that for nearly sixty-eight

years Madagascar was governed by native queens, giving the Malagasy women an importance unknown to other non-Christian countries. And not only has Madagascar had its queens, but, to quote Sibree, "some of the subject tribes have had chieftainesses of great intelligence and influence. One of these was Ihovana, formerly head of a northern Tanala tribe, a fine and stout old lady, who used to come up to the capital on special occasions to attend great national assemblies. At times she would take spear and shield, and in a rousing speech assure the Hova queen of her own and her people's loyalty and devotion. She would say: "I'm not a woman, but a man! And all that a man can do to defend the country, that will I do!"

It is interesting to note that this warlike old lady was a Christian, having been among those converted by English missionaries, and she did much to bring the gospel to the knowledge of certain of her own forest folk.

I noticed that at the Government reception only a few of the Malagasy ladies wore European dress, the majority being swathed in their picturesque lambas. They arrived for the party very early, and as soon as the doors were opened hurried to the ballroom, where they made a rush for the chairs ranged round the wall; and here they sat the whole evening absorbed in watching the dancing and enjoying the gay scene of the European women's pretty frocks mingling with the scarlet, white, and gold dress uniforms of the French military and other officials.

A couple of days later I was the guest at the farewell dinner given for me by General Roucaud and his wife. The French are accustomed to dine very late, but as I had to be called at five o'clock next morning to catch the "*laso*" (mail bus) for Majunga, the time of the dinner was kindly arranged for eight o'clock so that I should not be kept up too late.

It was indeed a delightful evening, and I was much touched by the welcome and congratulations I received; by the interest taken in my recent travels through the island, and by the good wishes that followed me home.

## CHAPTER XVII

### NORTH TO MAJUNGA

THE next morning, having with some difficulty managed to wake up in time to dress at the now familiar hour of five o'clock,

I was driven by the Bishop to the bus station, having sent my heavy luggage on in advance.

It is possible to book seats beforehand for Majunga, and I was thankful I had done so, for the mail car was crowded to its fullest capacity. I had a front corner seat, and would have been quite comfortable were it not for the fact that a Malagasy girl seated beside me was violently sick at intervals over the floor by my feet. There was no hope of changing places, and I had to endure things as best I could! These public buses roll considerably, owing to the acute turns and twists in the roads, and it is a common occurrence for a passenger to be sick, although until now I had had the good fortune to be nowhere near when this occurred.

It was a fine morning, with a lovely dawn, and the first part of the way over the high plateau was through grand mountain scenery and bare rolling hills, with yellowish-green grass, and on the horizon further mountain ranges silhouetted dark purple against the amber sky. Up here, at 5,000 feet, the air was exhilarating and cold, and, as at Ambositra, one needed one's warmest clothes.

Towards afternoon the road, with many a sharp twist and turn, began to dip sharply down, leaving the mountains behind. Once in the plains, the climate changed to tropical heat once more, the sudden contrast in temperature being very marked. With only one halt of any length at a little inn for lunch at mid-day, we did not reach Maevatana, where we were to spend the night, until 8.30 that evening.

The wayside hotel was clean and the food good, and after I had changed into a thin frock I enjoyed my supper and went straight to bed, so tired that I fell asleep immediately. I had been relieved to find that we were not due to start off again for Majunga until seven o'clock next morning, later than usual, so I enjoyed a longer night's rest than I had expected.

We travelled all day through wide expanses of flat scenery, wooded in places, but bare in others, the road being extremely hot, dried up, and dusty.

About 3.30 I could see we were nearing the coast, and at last, in shimmering heat, I found myself once more in Majunga, and, having collected my luggage, waiting for me at the office of the bus station, I drove to the Grand Hotel. When calling there for a meal on first landing in Madagascar I had thought the hotel, with its bare marble-topped tables and uncovered wooden floors, a poor place, but now, after the hardening

process I had gone through in the last months, it appeared a palace of luxury, and my room, with its good bed and large wardrobe, the acme of comfort!

Having a couple of days before embarking in the *Grandidier*, I had time to see a good deal of the native quarter of the town, where I was fascinated by the big covered market, the colour in which provided excellent subjects for kodachrome film, a good deal of which I was able to take successfully. This market was the most picturesque I had seen, and different from others in Madagascar in that its appearance was more Eastern than Malagasy, owing to the presence of the many Indians and Comorian women, with their brilliant saris of red, orange, emerald, and crimson: a kaleidoscope of colour as they stood bargaining over the stalls of green vegetables and luscious fruit of all kinds.

Like Tuléar, Majunga is very cosmopolitan, including people of many mixed races and tribes: Comorians, Sakalavas, Hovas, and Antaimoro, and members of other Malagasy tribes, together with a large population of Arabs, Indians, and Chinese. All were to be found at this market-place in the native quarter of the town; and here it was that the real life of the people could best be seen as they gossiped, argued, laughed, and bargained in a market-place that always appeared crowded, busy, and gay. In the town itself there were many merchants from the East, including Indian jewellers trading in gold and silver filigree work, while commerce of all kinds appeared to be much in the hands of Arabs and Chinese.

At the house of the British Vice-Consul, who had kindly invited me to lunch and dinner on each of the two days before I sailed, I had the good fortune to meet Mr. J. T. Gordge, a well-known missionary, a Quaker, who is doing splendid work among the Sakalava tribes between Tananarive and Maintirano on the west coast. He told me many interesting details about these primitive people. Famous warriors in the past, they still retain their war-like tendencies. Unlike their offshoot the Vezo, who are mainly fishermen, the Sakalava of the interior are a nomadic people, and live mainly by cattle-rearing, and sometimes by stealing; they also cultivate butter beans, rice, sugar canes, and manioc, while in the forested districts they are much occupied in the gathering and stripping of the leaves of the raffia palm, with which their huts are thatched.

It is sad to find that the Sakalava, a great proportion of whom remain heathen, are living in the same state of superstition

and fear as their Antandroy and Mahafaly brothers in the south. Propitiation of evilly disposed spirits is the aim of most of their religious rites, and forms the basis of the witchcraft and scorcery widely practised. So-called lucky and unlucky days are given the same importance as with the other unenlightened tribes of the Malagasy, and when out of reach of Government control the putting to death of an infant born on a Thursday is still occasionally practised. Mr. Gordge told me that when working in the village of Bekopaka, in the Sakalava district, north of Tulior, he met a woman he knew carrying a little baby. Aware that she had not been expecting one, he made enquiries and found that she and her husband had adopted the child, whom they had recently rescued from a horrible death. Her story was as follows: A neighbour who was expecting a baby, fearing it would arrive on a Thursday, had gone with her husband into the forest, there to await its birth, in order that should the child arrive on the unlucky day, they would be on the spot to bury it immediately. The other couple, having learned something of Christianity from the Friends' Mission in their district, decided that they ought to rescue the babe should it be necessary, and accordingly they secretly followed their neighbours into the forest. Unhappily, the birth took place, as the poor mother had feared, on a Thursday, and soon after the father was seen burying his new-born child, a boy. Immediately his back was turned the other man and his wife ran forward and brought the baby out alive from beneath the ant-heap under which it had been laid. The top of the heap of earth had been knocked off, the baby laid on the remainder, and the top lightly replaced, but so quickly was the child removed by his rescuers that he was mercifully unharmed. The woman seemed devoted to the child, and told Mr. Gordge that she had named him "*Trabonjy*", which, translated, means "Overtaken by salvation".

As with the other tribes, great importance is attached to burial-places, which are surrounded with superstition of all kinds. On one occasion Mr. Gordge had employed some men to build him a forest bungalow. While the men were digging at the foundations and ramming up the earth he noticed that they hammered so lightly that practically no result was being obtained. On his protesting at their slowness, they explained that they were afraid of disturbing an ancient grave which might possibly be somewhere near. Mr. Gordge assured them that, as it was *his* house and *his* soil, they need have no fear, for he would take the blame. This appeared to cause satisfaction and the men re-

sumed work with vigour, solemnly chanting to the spirits meanwhile: "It isn't ours, it's the white man's! It isn't ours, it's the white man's!", these words being repeated over and over again with each spadeful of earth!

In the district of Mainirano, the heart of the Sakalava country on the west coast, I was interested to hear of a little colony of Indian traders who are most of them either British subjects or British protected persons. Mr. Gordge told me that these men are extremely loyal to the British throne, and when they heard of the death of King George V in 1936 they immediately closed their shops, and came to the resident missionary in charge of their district to ask him how best they could express their sympathy with the Royal Family. It was agreed that a telegram should be sent to Queen Mary on their behalf, through the British Vice-Consul at Majunga. This was done, and, to the Indians' gratification, a message was received from the Consul expressing appreciation of their loyal and dutiful sentiments, which, he assured them, would be sent at once to the proper quarter.

This same body of Indians, at the Coronation of King George VI, came to Mr. Gordge's house to listen on his wireless set to the broadcast from Westminster Abbey, which he translated for their benefit into the Sakalava dialect. The interest and devotion of these natives is a touching example of the love inspired by the Throne and by the mother country, a love and loyalty that extends to the furthestmost corners of the globe.

The Sakalava tribe reaches as far north as Majunga, where mission work is largely in the hands of the Anglican Mission, whose big church, in charge of a native priest and evangelists, is visited from time to time by the Bishop from Tananarive, on episcopal tours to his northern churches.

The Sakalava, when freed from his chains of ignorance and superstition, has some fine qualities which, given the chance to develop, make of him a totally different being from that which he has been in the past. Indeed, this may be said of all the primitive tribes, once they are set free from the fears that bind them. It has been suggested that much of these fears, especially due to the belief in charms and to the insistence on lucky and unlucky days, dates back to the coming of Arab influence. At one time the worship and belief of the people appears to have been of a much higher form. This is proved by the collection of ancient native proverbs full of wisdom and religious feeling that have been handed down for generations among certain of the tribes. I quote from a few:

"Better be guilty with men than guilty with God."

"Don't think you are hidden in the lonely valley, for God is overhead. God, looking from on high, sees what is hidden."

"The bad of heart have no friends."

"It is a mist that darkens the Light."

"A pitcherful of clean water is no match for a hornful of dirty."

"Men are like the creeping stem of a pumpkin, and, if traced, are found to be one."

From these sayings one gets an insight into the true mind of the Malagasy before his religious beliefs became distorted and darkened, a mind still capable of rising to the heights of nobility and courage when given the chance.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### GATHERING WAR CLOUDS AND RACE FOR HOME

AFTER a couple of days' wait for the mail boat at Majunga I found myself the only British passenger on board the *Explorateur Grandidier*; the ship was full, mostly with French Government officials, some with their families, returning to Europe on leave or to take up other duties.

The voyage home is best forgotten. Enough to say that the almost unbearable heat of the Red Sea in August resulted in the collapse of ten of the crew from heat-stroke, and the sad death and burial at sea of a little child. The last two weeks in particular were anxious ones. No ships' visitors were allowed on board at ports, and we were led to believe that trouble might break out at any time in the Mediterranean, when we should run the risk of being stopped, and possibly interned. It was a race with time, and each morning one breathed a sigh of relief for being another day nearer home.

Marseilles at last and the war drawing nearer hour by hour! The tense and anxious crowds on the boulevards, unusually silent and engrossed in the latest editions of the newspapers with their alarming headlines. The crowded night train through France, with the taxi-drive across Paris next morning to the Gare du Nord. Paris, gay no longer, but fearful, brooding darkly on that which was to come. And, finally, the rush and scramble for the packed boat at Calais. Somehow or other, all succeeded in getting aboard, although there seemed hardly an inch of space to spare.

The sea was like a millpond, the sun shining from a cloudless sky, as with a thankful heart I saw at last the dear white cliffs of Dover, and knew that, whatever the uncertain future might hold for me, at least I no longer ran the risk of being cut off from my country at this critical hour.

Later on, while speeding once more through green English fields towards London, my thoughts returned to Madagascar, to the many varied and interesting experiences of the past months, and in particular to the fascination of the lonely treks in the hills through the great forests of the interior. I remembered a letter from a friend written after receiving an account from me of one of these forest journeys. She had expressed concern over what she considered must have been hardship of a trying kind—the early starts in the damp and mist, the rat-infested huts, the swarms of mosquitoes and other insects, and the long and difficult journeys by filanzana. “What makes you do it?” she had ended. Other people continue to ask the same question. Here is the answer: It is true that this, like other expeditions I have undertaken in the past, was not without its hard times, but these are forgotten in looking back upon the other side of the picture. The wonderful beauty of the forests, the lovely effects of light and shade in the early mornings, when the sun, breaking through the mist, would reveal a fairyland of delicate green, each fern and blade sparkling with dewdrops and netted across with the shiny silver lacework of a myriad cobwebs; the towering wooded hills with their deep shadows; the awe-inspiring silence and the strange feeling that, apart from the natives, few, if any, from the outside world had even been there.

All this made the discomfort and occasional fatigue well worth while, for without enduring the one I could not have experienced the other. The answer, therefore, to the question of why I do it is briefly this: “Because through it all, apart from the satisfaction of achieving that which I set out to do, I gain something that I could obtain in no other way, an experience of beauty and wonder, the revelation of which I regard as a gift to be passed on to others; and, although I am conscious that the attempt to do so is often sadly inadequate, nevertheless the effort entailed is not the least part of the happiness that comes as a result of the successful conclusion of my joyful adventures in travel.

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